

792.0496 / THE /

Preview: Ken G. Hall's autobiography

Playscript: Jack Hibberd's The Overcoat

Focus on South Australia

Australia's magazine
of the performing arts
May 1977, \$1.95

THEATRE

AUGUST



AT LAST!
THE ULTIMATE
THEATRE BOOK!

DRAG SHOW

Featuring Peter Lorre, Divine and
Sister Je-Sus: The Evolution of Religious Freedom



\$6.95

at all good
bookshops

Published by Currency Press Pty Limited
87 Jersey Road, Woolrahra New South Wales 2025

Distributors: Book People of Australia
590 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000



Theatre

May 1977
Volume 2, Number 1

Australia

Guide What to see and where to see it 3
Quotas and Quotations 6
Comments 2

Theatre Forum Professionals get 10 votes, you get to guess the winners 8

Focus on S.A. On the Festival Centre by Kevin Kamp and George Molnar 10
Ruth Cracknell Profile: Just Ruth by Colin George et al 11
Deadly Accents — that's Cracknell by Kevin Kamp 13
The South Australian Theatre Company by Peter Ward 16
George Gulyas and Colin George by Kevin Kamp 20
Australians who aren't are other Australians by Rae Blair 23
Don Dunstan Speaking Out to Tony Baker 25

Features Now where were we up to Sally? 7
Filmaker Gill Armstrong looks at an actress' director 27

Directed by Ken G. Hall: Extracts from his forthcoming autobiography 63

Playscript Jack Hibbard's *The Gracious* 25
An interview by Tim Robertson 36

Ballet Universe 2 by Malcolm Robertson 37
Interview with Graeme Murphy 32
The Australian Dance Theatre by William Showbridge 32

International Lively trends in Poland by Bogdan Gerasimow 68

Theater Reviews *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* Roger Palmer 47
Last for Power Murray Puraar 48
Transcend Bob Dylan 49
The Pleasure of His Company Norman Knott 50
This is a Good Man Charles Brown Alison Jones 51
What the Butler Saw Robert Page 52
Next! Skylight and Muppet Pier Rot Christopher 53
Holton's Choice Richard Fetheringham 54

Dangerous Curves Don Hatchard 55
The Department Margaret Luke 56
A Way with Sheep Celia Johnson 57
Snowy Yule Snow Ted Katz 58
Madam Michael Morley 59
Rescued Suzanne Spangler 60
The School for Scandal Jack Hibbard 61
The Fall Guy Garry Macmillan 63
Leading Lady Raymond Stanley 64

Opera *La Belle Helene* David Gyger 74
Records Britain's paradox and the return to ritual by Roger Cawell
Film Books *Elton Fetter* Barry Lowe
Five Plays for Stage, Radio and Television Helen van der Foorten

Directed
by Ken G. Hall
Special pre-publication
Book offer. See p.80 ■

COMMENT

Australian talent in Australian commercial theatre suddenly seems to be burgeoning. *A Labor Day* with an Australian cast, probably the biggest venture of 1977, has, we hear, won outstanding praise from its organizers, the Americans, who apparently think the original cast wasn't as good as this one, and Michael Brookman and Edgley have already found a financially rewarding encore. *Parachute Productions* are also very happy about the way *Seven Years West*, with Gavan MacNab and Nancy Hayes, has been going on its nationwide tour. Wilson Morley, managing director of Parachute, is convinced that what Australians want is to see Australians — not the TV show across from Britain and America who are still being forced upon them by those who think that Australia is a better alternative to Brighton for pre-West End tryouts — and a lot sooner. Parachute aren't just putting the home-grown product because of a sense of national honour and idealism, but because they feel that from now on this is what makes business sense: this is what will put bums on seats. Ken Brothman obviously agrees when *The Jewess* and *Oil That Jew* is presented — perhaps the producers of *The Two of Us* are wishing they had more faith. *John Thaw and Shelly Manne's The Sweeper and The Big French* don't seem to be dragging in the crowds as expected. The crucial response has been as negative in Melbourne, where the producers are apparently thinking of never touring that kind of production there again.

If the Australian content is blooming in the commercial world, how is it faring in the subsidised theatres at present? The Old Tote are doing well with a healthy Australian bias at the Parade, and three classics, two Russian and one Australian (Ecole's *The Jew* or *The Yeti Spy*) as their "quizzes" round the Drama Theatre. The MTC has two Australian plays at Russell Street, but at the Athenaeum, where they have stated it will be "possible to 'bob shoulders'" with great writing, there has something to say for all sorts, of the four plays not one is Australian. They may not be as long-established as the works from older countries that are, but surely we too have produced classic works that speak down through place and time, and surely they have more relevance to our way of life?

The segregation of the Australian from the "classic" would seem to be going against what is in the founding charter of

the Australia Council, the group of a national character to Australian art. If this bears any relation to what grant funding is like, it is worth considering what policies of excluding Australian plays from the reading of "the great" and "the classic" are doing to our drama's national identity.

The School for Scandal opened both the MTC and the SACTC 1977 seasons, in equally compromised ways and it seems the Adelaide production came off considerably better. The SACTC is no a grant exempt in the hands of drugmen from this year, with Colin George as artistic director, Roger Chapman as head of TIE, and Rodney Ford as designer, and indeed all have established their art and audience very quickly and impressively since arriving. However, aparting the production, though there is the worry that Adelaide's major theatre company will be relying too heavily on European playwrights, like the *Scandal* and *The Cherry Orchard* that start its season. Are the grants of subsidised theatre following the line that is basic to commercial theatre? That of giving the maximum audiences, and not looking enough to their, in some ways, privileged position of being able to consider before audience-cuts, the importance of the national artistic content of the plays they put on?

Adelaide has always liked to feel that with her lies the truest appreciation of the arts, and especially the theatre arts, after all, they've had the Festival Centre to prove it. But is Adelaide more the home of good PR? This month we have an interview with that master-of-PR, Ron Davison, who is less about his arts policies. The Festival Centre complex is closely scrutinised and the South Australian Theatre Company assured, as are its present director and his predecessor.

As Mr Davison has often shown, good presentation, though it may not be everything, certainly helps a lot, especially when there's also something good to be presented. We (as you may have noticed) think Australian theatre is good and therefore deserves to be presented as well as possible, our new partnership with Melbourne poster William Field is enabling *Theatre Australia* to become a much better-looking magazine. We hope that this will help us to act as a more effective ambassador for the theatre arts of this country, both at home and abroad, where our own brand and style of theatre, writers, actors, directors and designers must become an important force and one to be reckoned with.

DEBORA LARSEN

Editor: Robert Page
Executive Editor: Lucy Wagner
Associate Editor: Bruce Knappell
Bookend: Joyce Farrel

Advisory Board

John Bell, Georges Bensoussan, Alan Broad, John Butt, Michael Cacoyannis, Steven Chafetz, Gordon Chater, John Clarke, W. A. Franks, Lyndy Givry, Jack Hulbert, Ken Hume, Gordon Hunt, Maxine Koen, Michael Philip Marion, Stan Monte, John Murphy, Phil Neary, Raymond Norris, Alan Saks, Michael Saks, David Saks, Daniel Saks, John Saxon, Tony Treadell, Andrew Worthy, Richard Wherrett

Photographer: John Curran

Art Director: Alex Stein

Production Editor: Forbes Miller

Correspondents

Sydney: Sue Manger (02) 214-2668
Melbourne: Raymond Stanley (03) 419-2204
Brisbane: Helen Buchholz (07) 259-2818
Perth: Jean Anderson (09) 41 5476
Adelaide: Michael Morley (08) 211-2264

Theatre Australia gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Australia Council, the Victorian Board of the Australia Council, the New South Wales Cultural Grants Board, the Arts Grants Advisory Committee of South Australia, the Queensland Cultural Advisory Department, the Victorian Ministry of the Arts, the University of New South Wales Drama Department and the Association of the University of Tasmania.

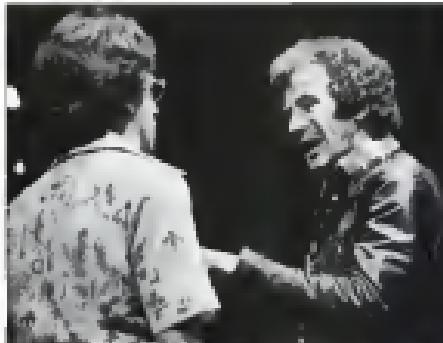
Manuscripts

Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be forwarded to the editorial offices, 1 Princes Place, New Lambton Heights, New South Wales 2305, telephone part 32 9795. While every care is taken of manuscripts and visual material supplied for this magazine, the publishers and their agents accept no liability for loss, damage which may occur. Unpublished manuscripts and visual material will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Originals supplied in typed articles are not necessarily those of the editors.

Subscriptions and advertising

The subscription rate is \$12.90 post free within Australia. Changes should be made payable to Theatre Australia and posted to the publishers' address. For advertising, information contact the publisher at Melbourne (03) 42 0681 or New Smyrna Sydney (02) 434-2664.

Theatre Australia is published monthly by Playhouse Press Pty Ltd, 114 Coombe Street, Richmond, Victoria 3121. Quarrelled by subscription and through dealer agents by Playhouse Press and its agents throughout Australia by Gordon and Gough (Aust) Ltd, WILLERSLEY, SYDNEY, by Alan Symmons Pty Ltd, and printed by Murray J. Field & Co Pty Ltd, 114 Coombe Street, Richmond, Victoria 3121. Playhouse Press Pty Ltd 1977. All rights reserved except where specified. The cover price is maximum recommended retail price only. Registered for posting as a periodical category C.



people they care know.

My mother always attacks the nephews when we go over... I have two friends who have drinking problems. Yet I've known this observer just like that... You guys like an actress I know, terribly delighted at parties, but you wouldn't know her as your best friend. I know a professor who does jumpy dances and moves furniture around... Why would someone offer their wife in their best journal? Do you know anybody who does that? Does anybody know anyone who has affairs with men as well as women?

Everybody is enjoying themselves. The room begins to sound like a psycho-encounter group without the psycho priest. One by one they dip tentatively into their characters' diapers, navel, carbo-boob and cock holes. The wouldn't-be-a-turn into something else...

Obviously part of the barrier is broken down because we've shared that childhood thing. I think it comes out of a sense of righteous indignation. A kind of Scrooge thing. It's constant paranoia, isn't it?

I don't think nothing's ever a show-off all that useful! You it is. I was always called a show-off at school and it used to piss me... You're a show-off! Deep down I think he knows his film aren't very good either. Am I joking or serious here? Wouldn't I go and say? Would I give you a kiss? I feel funny saying... Then my handbag... Where?

There is a dramatic pause. All look to the director for direction. Once again he pushes them back into finding their own.

Try again... See how it feels... Let it come naturally... Just try to remember what you're trying to say in this scene...

They begin to try out various moves of their own. The pervading atmosphere of happy concentrated involvement, I realize, is very productive. Our director sits like a painting anchor at the side of the chalk line and gently pushes each to contribute towards defining the underlying motivations and attitudes behind each scene and line. From the owners and guests at a related back restaurant.

"How would you feel under all these sheets?" I think that I'll just sit there... Don't worry about the trust issues, get Ambie a bit and see how you feel... Take a moment to think of everything that occurs to you before you ask them in...

SALLY, MAILE WHAT A SURPRISE!

JILL, I KNOW IT'S A CLICHE BUT YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT.

"No don't sit there, that's the coffee tray..."

So by happy end, the gaps are filled in and each character is placed in living, breathing, drinking, ejaculating, libidinistic, the somebody-we-all-know-some-where reality.

Our director, slowly racking his Martin chow espresso, is that there is no rush to find all the answers yet, that we are all in-

olved in a growing process and that some of the larger truths will only come later in their own time. Everybody looks happily forward to that time.



By the end of the second week, the play is beginning to take some sort of clearly moving shape. Our director, I notice, now begins to start to mould that shape... "Hold it. Remember the sense of what he is thinking... Did you do the dishes out there? Did they make you feel good? What are you both doing in that little place? How do you feel? What's dominating?" Think to yourself every time you say a line, "How does that grab you?" Try counting the between laugh lines. Use those silences.

Try following her around as you talk. Let's remember the effect on the audience... Let's lead them along and then shock them... OK, let's try it again, keeping all those things in mind."



It is week three of my life as an observer. Scars are down. Lines are not. Objectives



QUEENSLAND (07 2323)

Upstart Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. Director, John Bell, designer, Kim Carpenter. With Neil Ferguson as Malvolio, Peter Lavelle as Feste, Barry Otto as Orsino, Anna Veljan as Olivia, Russell Wright as Viola, Helen Faughton in As You Like It (From 22 Apr.)

Downton Abbey: A Musical Review by Richard Bradshaw, The Curious Report by John Simmons and The Play by M. Perri. All directed by Richard Wherrett (From 7 May.)

OLD TOWN (040 6122)

Drama Theatre, Opera House. Così fan tutte by George Bernard Shaw. Director, William Redmond, designer, Shian Gibson and Mike Bridgeman. With Robyn Neave, James Corden, Ross Graham, Jacki Kett, Richard Meekle (From 20 April.)

French Theatre: The Alchemist by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Director, John Clark, designer, Alan Lee. With Bruce Spence, John Kavanagh, Peter Westford, Stanley Welsh, Cola Clark (16-24 May.)

Q THEATRE, Perth (087 21 3333)

Lock Up Your Daughters by Henry Fielding, adapted by Bernard Miles of the Garrick Theatre, London. Director, Arthur Crighton, designer, Duncan Warburton. With Ron Hackett as Mr Squeers, Vola Vendetta as Mrs Squeers, Lee Taylor as Rumble, Ron Roger as Constant, Linda Wilkinson as Helen (Marsden Rehabilitation Centre, Parramatta, 20-24 April; Railway Institute, Perth, 27-30 April.)

What The State! Saw by Jon Orton. Director, Adam Baker, designer, Arthur Dicks. With Ron Hackett, Vola Vendetta, Lee Taylor, Ron Roger, Linda Wilkinson (Railway Institute, Perth, 11-12 May, Civic Centre, Bankstown, 23-29 May.)

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY, Wagga (069 21 2140)

Hamlet by Jim Weiss and Blend Scipione. Director, Terry O'Connell, designer, Fred Lyon (14-26 Apr.)

ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL OPERA COMPANY (02 48116)

Trial by Jury and The Sorcerer by Gilbert and Sullivan (22, 23 Apr.)

ST. JAMES LUNCHEONTE PLATINUM (02 8570)

The Coach by Mary Davis. Directors, Peter Williams and Michael Marshall (16-17 May.)

SEYMOUR CENTRE (092 01330)

York, Golding and Solomons (To 10 Apr.)

Downton: Sassy South by George Dallal. Director, David Merv. A Sydney University Dramatic Society production (27 Apr -14 May.)

SPEAKEASY RESTAURANT, Remington (063 1442)

Son of Saul by Barry Cryer.

THEATRE ROYAL (01 6177)

Lander A one-man show on the life and songs of Harry Lander, devised and presented by John Logan (10-1 May.)

Doctor in Love by Richard Gordon. Produced by Gary Van Egmond and Paul Dandy. With Helen Noden, Geoffrey Davies (From 9 May.)

UNIVERSITY OF NSW OPERA (062 3412)

Notre Dame: Joan of Arc (Verdi) in Italian. Director, David Bonyhak, musical director, Roger Connell (18, 19 May.)

**QUEENSLAND****ARTS THEATRE (07 2666)**

How the Other Half Lives by Alan Ayckbourn. Director, Karen Radbourne, designer, Jennifer Radbourne. With Frank Foster, Jacki Brown, Fiona Foster, Mary Anne Hulme, Rob Phillips, Alan Hough, Terri Phillips, Catherine Scott, William Featherstone, Michael Downey, Mary Featherstone, Christine Kelly (14 Apr -14 May.)

Alabaster and Melodeon by Ronald Miller. Director, Ian Thomson, designer, Ian Thomson. With Ian Grindley, Tom Pashford, Jeff Hayes, Dennis Taylor, Donald Bostock (19 May-19 June.)

CAMERATA (06 6561)

A Winter's Tale by William Shakespeare. Director, David Giesen, designer, Clare Beesner. With Ken Parker, Wendy Nugent, Alan Klemm, Richard Michael, Rhylene Torrey, Rosemary Price, Stephen Scrimshaw, Paul Baker, Bill Ware (17 Apr -7 May, Avalon, St Lucia.)

(From 19 May, The Singers by Chalken.)

HER MAJESTY'S (02 2777)

Doctor in Love by Richard Gordon. Produced by Gary Van Egmond and Paul Dandy. With Robyn Trindall and Geoffrey Davies (16 Apr -1 May.)

LA WHITE (06 2290)

Given by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey. Director, Graeme Johnson. With Sean Mac, Sally Bannerman, Dale Day, Jo Harde, Graeme Hartnett, Paul Hester (29 Apr -4 June.)

QUEENSLAND BALLET (07 3135)

Twelfth Night (From 22-23)

Spin Off! A programme of ballets choreographed by members of the company (18-21 May.)

QUEENSLAND LIGHT OPERA COMPANY

The Gondoliers by Gilbert and Sullivan. Director, David Macfarlane, designer, Max Harley. With Gerald Stans, Ian McAdam, Maureen Howard, Dennis Morris, Tim Kitchener, Mary Blaik, Rosemary, by Gilbert and Sullivan

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY (01 7748)

One Flea Spare (Down Under, in English)

Die Fledermaus (At Home in Hell, 20 Apr., Townsville, 21 Apr., Ipswich, 22 Apr., Cairns, 23 Apr., Rockhampton, 25 Apr., Gladstone, 26 Apr.) Producer, John Thompson, designer, James Ridder, musical director, Graeme Young. Marianne as One Flea Spare, Arthur Johnson as Frosch, Sally Robertson as Nossack, Denis White as the Moth.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (01 7761)

Closed until The Last of the Knuckabones opens 22 June.

TWELFTH NIGHT (02 3889)

Something's Afoot by James McDonald, David Voss and Robert Golech. Director, John Whitley, designer, Jennifer Coddington (14 Apr -14 May.)

Tom Sawyer directed by Ross James

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA****ARTS THEATRE (07 5771)**

How the Other Half Lives by Alan Ayckbourn. Director, Paul Wilkins (10 Apr -7 May.)

A Children's Show by Ian and Pamela Johnson (14-28 May.)

FESTIVAL CENTRE (01 2292)

The Space Jack the Ripper by Ross Palmer and Dennis de Mare. Director, Brian Doherty. Adelaide Theatre Group Production (From 1 May)

Q THEATRE (02 5601)

Mad Like Lucifer by Graham Sted. Director, Bill O'Day (20 Apr -21 May. Wed and Sat only.)

The Reluctant Suburbanite by William Douglas Hunt. Director, Frank Garrya (From 1 June.)

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY (01 5131)

For Paul with Ruth Cawdron. Director, Colin George, designer, Rodney Ford (21 May.)

An My Son by Arthur Miller. Director, David Williamson, designer, John Corcoran (26 May -18 June.)

**TAHANIA****THEATRE ROYAL (04 6160)**

Coast Drama. Director, John Unwin (To 10 Apr.)

University Rose. The Old Nick Theatre Company (6-21 May.)

The Education of Agnes by Franklin

Steve J. Spence, Director, Richard Wherrey, With Gordon Chater. (To May—4 June)

VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (343 2826)

Romeo and Juliet William Shakespeare Company Director, Harold Bogen. With Chris and Judith Crook. (To 30 Apr.)

AUSTRALIAN OPERA

PRINCESS THEATRE (662 1333)

Madame Butterfly (Puccini) in Italian. (14 Apr.)

Producer, John Copley, designer, Michael Stamen (costumes) and Henry Bordin (sets), conductor, Carlo Felice. Maria Sighioli as Butterfly, Lamento Perini as Pinkerton, Gerald MacCormack as Sharpless, Lesley Stander as Suzuki. *Carries* (short) in French. (21, 22, 25, 27, 29 Apr., 3, 5, 11 May, 14 May (mat), 16 May.)

Producer and designer, Tom Langwood, conductor, Russell Chinnell. *Montereggi* Margaret Elliston. *Sweeney Todd* as Cawley, Ross Stevens as Dan Asia, Isobel Buchanan or Deborah Cambridge as Mabel, Raymond Myers or Peter van der Stak as Fagin. *La*

Fidels (Beethoven) in German. (21, 26, 28 Apr., 10 Apr (mat), 3, 7, 9, 13, 18 May.) Designer, Alan Lomax, conductor, Carlo Felice. *Laura* Kogell, Winter or Nanci Grant as Lazarus, Emyl Farias or Cynthia Johnson as Jacqueline, John Shaw as Pizzaro, Neil Warren-Smith or Donald Shanks as Rocco, Robert Altman or Great Dickens as Don Fernando.

Lakmé (Delibes) in French. (29 Apr., 2, 4 May, 7 May (mat).)

Producer Norman Ayton, designer, Desmond Dugay, conductor, Peter Robinson. *Handa We're at Lakme*, Helen Weston as Gerald, Robert Altman as Minkowitz, Margaret Elliston as Mafeking, Graeme Smith as Hudy, John Pringle or Peter van der Stak as Fidels.

The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart) in English. (12, 14, 17, 19 May.)

Producer, John Copley, designer, Michael Stamen (costumes) and Henry Bordin (sets), conductor, Peter Robinson. Cynthia Johnson as Susanna, Nanci Grant as the Countess, Jennifer Birmingham as Cherubino, Roisin Rankin as Marcellina, Gerald MacCormack as Figaro, John Pringle as the Count, Robert Gird as Basilio, Neil Warren-Smith as Bartolo.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7110)

Front Factory From Theatre

Star Log — Its Categories for Lighting P. Kinsella by Steve Murray. Director, Paul Hampton. (To 24 Apr.)

The Milk Family Show (From 5 May.)

COMEDY THEATRE (662 3211)

The Pleasure of His Company by Samuel Taylor adapted by Gordon Cox. Stanner Paul. Other presentations in association with Australian Christian Theatre Trust and Playbill (Aust.) Pty. Ltd. by arrangement with J.C. Williamson Pty. Ltd. With Douglas Fairhurst Jr., Stanley Holloway, David Langton, Cedric Raye. (To 7 May.)

Laudie, devised, created and performed by Anny Leger. Presented by Paul Elliot. (From 11 May.)

GUILD THEATRE, MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY (667 4180)

Five Foxes by J.M. Synge. A new, abridged production of the original script. (19, 23 Apr. and 26, 28 Apr.)

H.M. MAJESTY'S THEATRE (662 1311)

The Twenties and '30s *Then Jazz*. A musical recollection with John Badach, Carolyn Gallant and John O'Meara. Musical director, Michael Tracy. choreography, John Flanagan; design, Tricia Purcell. Presented by J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd. and Michael Flanagan International Pty. Ltd. (From 16 Apr.)

LA MAMA (347 0882)

Saturne Sacré. A night of experimental music. Chris Marin and Warren Burt. (To 24 Apr.)

Music with Movie Composers, David Tolley and Dore Dore, cinema, James Clayton.

LAST LAUGH (419 8230)

4 Crazy Things Directed by Barry Whitsun. With Betty Webster, Robert Eaton, Peter Craggins, Harry Evans.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (674 1101)

Atherton Theatre School for Seniors by R. B. Sheridan. Directed by Ray Lawler, designed Tony Triggs. (To 21 Apr.)

June and the Person by Sean O'Casey. Director, Ray Lawler, designer, Tony Triggs. (From 5 May.)

Russell Street *The Full Goy* by Linda Atkinson. Directed and designed by Mick Rodger. With Murray Drakie, Trevor Denison, Norman Ross and Stephen Oldfield. (To 21 May.)

The Club by David Williamson. Director, Rodney Fisher, designer, Shona Gurnett. (From 26 May.)

THEATRE IN EDINBURGH

Life is a Lesson in Spanish by Joaquínίn Huidobro

The Waterman's Wife by John Powers. Director, Greg Steward.

Man for a Day by Adrienne Mitchell. Directed and designed by Robert Lepage Company. A. Mousabbin. (18 Apr.—6 May, Matinee 21 May—1 June) Company B. Wimberley, Marianne, 18 Apr.—6 May, Matinee 21 May—1 June) Company B. Wimberley, Marianne, 18 Apr.—6 May, Matinee 21 May—1 June.

MORELAND THEATRE RESTAURANT (36 5643)

Going to Town. A musical revue produced by Tony Sculthorpe (Music—Sara)

PLAY BOX THEATRE (662 2911)

Caravans *Terrestrial* A. Gibbin and Sullivan. Musical review by Ian Taylor. Director, Ted Craig, designer, David Brown. With John Dwyer and John Hansen. Presented by the Australian Shakespeare Theatre Trust in association with the NL Centre, Paul Elliott and Marion Street Theatre. (From 23 May.)

REGENT PALACE (419 3880)

The Rocky Horror Show. Presented by Harry M. Miller. (Throughout May.)

ST MARTIN'S THEATRE (664 4001)

Leading Lady. A musical revue presented by Eric Dene and William Orr. With Jill Pettyjohn, Bryan Davis and Darren Hulme.

TOTAL THEATRE (662 4790)

Let My People Come. A musical celebration of sex by Karl Wilson Inc. Directed by Peter Hulme, presented by Eric Dene.

WINDSOR REGIS (31 5979)

Son of Naked Hour by Tony Sander and Gary Riley.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOLE IN THE WALL (81 2465)

Crazing Wagga by Adeline Allegro. Director, John Wilson. Agency handled with Robert von Mecklenburg and Alan Heidecker. (20 Apr.—14 May.)

Traveler by Tom Stoppard. Director, John Wilson. Starring Edgar Mascaff. (18 May—16 June.)

PLAYHOUSE (23 1944)

Aborigine Friends by Alan Ayckbourn. Director, Anne Maclean. With Carol Scorsari, Alan Cressell, Leslie Wright, Keith Taylor, Ian Nichols, Trishley Evans. (21 Apr.—14 May.)

GREEN ROOM, Playhouse

Adored by David Baden. Director, Andrew Ross. With Prue Williamson, Adele Lewis, Dianne Miller, Ian Scott. Adults only. (22 Apr.—14 May.)

BALLET SCHOOL, performances at the CONCERTI HALL.

Street Games by Walter Gore.

Play and the Play by Benjamin Britten. A newly choreographed version by Helen Hug. Adult Performances. (22, 23 Apr.)

WAITHAITMAN THEATRE (66 2317)

Afraid and Angry by Ronald Miller. Director, Tony McNaught. (4—21 May.)

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN OPERA COMPANY (31 1945 or 71 6039)

Parf Entertainment Center *The Mikado* (Gillian & Sullivan). (7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19 May.)

Producer, Sean Crowley. With Jane Knott, Dennis Ober, Thomas Edwards.

QUOTE & QUERIES

THEATRE FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

DIANE SHARPE, producer manager, Old Tote Theatre Company and ATYP

"There are two purposes to my main concern. The first relates to, but is not the direct concern of, the Adelaidian Project. I shall be looking at how the performances are developing in disadvantaged areas — which, inevitably, in the instance, have industrial troubles and high migrant populations.

"There is a shift in developing such community activity base, so it is well to see the parameters in Münchhausen and Newcastle upon Tyne — what's working and especially what's not working.

"The other purpose is to examine arts administration courses in England, which will include the general setting of regional theatre in Wednesbury. I have seven details about the worth and efficiency of arts administration courses as they are set up anywhere in the world. The three- or six-month crash courses at Harvard and Yale have two main drawbacks, twelve months' placement in a theatre company here just isn't enough. Trainees need three years of practice backed by solid theory — an apprenticeship is best.

"More centres in this area are being set up here, in Victoria, and South Australia. What I want to do is find the strengths and weaknesses of what is happening in English polytechnics and Arts Council courses so that we can incorporate the best and, hopefully, avoid the pitfalls here."

AFTER THE GOLF

RAY LAWLER, playwright: "The *Dad* trilogy is to be published in October as a hardback drama by Currency Press. At the moment I'm revising it for publication, the stage directions now have come in the front of the play and there are certain scenes to sharpen up now I've seen the whole thing together."

"There had been doubts all along the way in the long process of writing the plays, and though I wouldn't personally attempt to assess them, I am very pleased now it is complete. I suppose my greatest response was one of relief, when they ran together, that they did integrate.

"Someone said, 'Why not write the whole 17 numbers?' but that would be miles of hell. It is now while there is definitely no more. There has been comment, too, of the traditional style, but it is not written 17 years onwards but 17 years back — and I feel the style I could have written can be as expressive and per-

sonal as would have joined separately. I can understand that people say, 'Why write it at all?' but not that what parts should have been written using more modern techniques.

"I work in close touch with the grassroots, in rhythms and song. But over the way the *Dad* is now played has changed, though that opened up of Australian speech remains. Writing like that, I feel I couldn't write a readers' Australian play because of the change in grass-roots models of speaking. O'Casey has the same concerns, and that my love for his work and the 10 years I spent as his biographer especially pleasure to direct *Joan of the瑞* (Japan 3 May), the first of his plays I've tackled. After being away from practical theatre for so long, it is good to be back. Give our love back. But (John Banister) I believe I just have time off to write now — but not on the *Dad*!"

ADMINISTRATION

ELIZABETH SWEEING, "An Arts Administration course, business-oriented and of a year's duration is currently being planned in Adelaide. Anyone interested in being kept in touch with its development should write to Elizabeth Sweening, c/o Arts Council of SA, 499 Morphett Street, Adelaide. It would be helpful if inquiries could include details of qualifications and past and present experience."

"I have worked in Adelaide now for one year and have made two previous visits Working around Australia in the arts I have found that there is a need for further training in business subjects and with regard to arts organisations, as well as in the performing arts, music and the visual arts. As an assistance to developing this need increase we must be able to take our place alongside the business organisations and funding bodies with which we are connected."

BACK TO PERTH

RAYMOND O'NEIL, "First of all, I am very flattered that the University of Western Australia has chosen me to be its first director of residence. The appointment starts on 12 June and lasts for six weeks, but the university wanted three months, but I couldn't manage that. I'm also very moved, as I was a part of those production years in the 1980s when university drama there flourished as an after-dark. And I'm excited as the university is full of very varied venues for production. I will be conducting a series of workshops for all students, not just those in the English Department, and some

informal lectures, culminating on the end with a production possibly with both students and some professional actors. This will either be a suitable classic related to students, or the something quite different. Two plays I'm very interested in at the moment are Wickland's *Spring Awakening* and a little-known Schubert, called *The Army of Moses*.

"I'm always delighted to return to Perth. The audience are in many ways more demanding. They never took to the subscription scheme, so theatre really has to entertain and stimulate to get people in, unlike most capitals, where there are people all through a run because they have already bought their tickets. *Wise* of *Death* is the way things work over there. *Wise* was sold out before the reviews even came out."

SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

DAVYN GORDON, director Ensemble Theatre: "We were approached by the New York agent of *Moral of House Bag* by Tom Cole (as well as a pleasure cruise) from customary procedures. We read the play 'You asked, may we?' There were problems of course, including writing, length and the fact that it was a very short play. A long one-acter."

"The cast? We found it in Arts Council Goldman, Dorothy Norma and Fred Stade.

"Whatever went with it, as something short, would have to match in some manner. Everyone at the Ensemble engaged in a frantic play-reading session. Suddenly it was the *It*. A long-time friend of actress Marjorie Brisson — *Alison Mary Page* by David Malouf and directed by Michael O'Reilly — had finally presented one Sunday night for an invited audience.

"Alison has become disturbed in her search for identity. The subject of *Moral of House Bag* has become disturbed mostly from being confronted by his identity. Would the plays work together?"

"Would they work at all?" You tell us."

NEED HOME FOR HOLE

JOHN ANDERSON, director, Hole-in-the-Wall Theatre: "The real problem facing the Hole at the moment is the budget of costs. We've been playing in full houses, but with a limited number of seats it's becoming a difficult situation. We're constantly looking for some suitable old building close to the city. Something I'm very excited about is the return of Western Australian Judy Mann (of The Big Game) to Perth for a season. Running as a little

night show concurrently with *Francesca*, in which she will have a part. Judy will be appearing in the famous one-woman show, *Jean Cocteau's The Human Voice*, so she will be doing two shows a night!"

ENTERTAINING IN BRIGHT LIGHT

DAVID BLENKINSOPP, director, Festival of Perth: "You want a quote from me on planning next year's festival? The one, 1977, had very interesting results. In particular the Western Australian community supported its own companies very well and international acts in the same shape had excellent audiences. As for visiting companies, I think the APG presented an interesting play, and might have done a lot better in a different venue. I suspect a lot of people were put off by the expectation of 'serious culture' as opposed, and the small savings audiences didn't respond. As for the Old Taxis, even though *The Plough and the Stars* had a distinguished director, a distinguished cast and a distinguished designer, it drew less than 10 per cent audiences. There could have been a much worthy effort from Australian leading theatre companies."

DREAM COME TRUE

DAVID ADDENBROKE, director, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "I'm very excited and flattered that Tony Fawa and the Adelaide Festival committee want me. They saw my production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Perth Festival this year by far the most original and pleasurable event in the festival. As a result of seeing it, they are inviting the company to present the show in Adelaide as the principal production in the new Amphitheatre of the Festival Complex. At this stage, it is planned to take the production as is, with both professionals and students."

ASTONISHINGLY ORIGINAL PLAY

At the beginning of 1975 a new play opened the Black Theatre season at Rialto, Sydney. This play was *The Collected* by Robert Morris. Now two years later it is being presented by the Aboriginal Arts Board at the Bondi Pavilion Theatre for a season of six weeks beginning Friday, 24 April. The director is George Gipper, the designer Wendy Dackson, with film segments by Gail Armstrong, and a cast including Brian Syrus, James Saunders and Max Collier. **GEORGE GIPPER**, freshwater director, comments: "The invitation to direct *The Collected* has resulted in one of the most exciting projects for me in many years. Not only is the play one of enormous social significance for Australians today, dealing with the life of a represended minority, their hopes, dreams and present confusions, but I consider Robert Morris to be one of the finest playwrights to emerge in recent years. His grasp and understanding of both dialogue and construction is the more astonishing when one realises that this is his first play."

1976 PLANS AND REVIVALS

JOHN BELL, artistic director, National

"Reviews and these Box plays may seem a change from National policy, but not usually. We are doing one Australian play this year, as well as the two Shakespeare and *Francesca*. Presenting the three as a double season was just a silly suggestion — and then done with a very large company at a very small cost."

The two revivals are there because some plays have a longer life than the four and five weeks of the first run. It's a pity not to let larger audiences see them. And some plays have become in some sense classics of the National style: plays like *Mates and Brothers*, *Brigadoon*, *Frankie and Johnny* etc are ones we have become known for. I quite like the idea of building up a repertoire though I'm not saying that we will keep them around for years.

"If only touring were cheaper! It's working with European arts bureaux, but anything beyond a four-hander we just couldn't manage. A Shakespeare is obviously out of the question. Without touring, the only way to get the plays before more people is to travel there. But it's not as if we're being inundated, unlike the Opera Company, where virtually nothing is new.

It's a matter of trying to find variations on opening a new production once every three weeks on average. Even so, we are still putting on more than a year and we are aiming to turn people up more quickly.

"And the future? I certainly don't want the building to get any bigger, it's fine as it stands, at least for the next five years.

LETTERS

Learn writing to point out a mistake in your extremely accurate reporting, in this instance, in the February-March issue, "On top — Film" by Barry Lowe.

I refer to paragraph four and the film *On, or rather*. "The film has been sold for a ludicrously small amount and is to undergo the unenviable task of being dubbed into American."

The company was brought to my attention by the Australian Film Commissioner's agent in New York, Jim Honey, and the American distribution house who have bought the American distribution rights. The distributor is not dubbing into American, but is remaking tracks to make the Australian accents clearer for American ears. He also intends making the English sound deeper to increase the film's track appeal.

Further, the deal negotiated was for a substantial "upfront" payment and thereafter a percentage of the box office, so that the sales results will depend on the film's success in the States. The sale was not cash outright, as suggested in your article.

REG FRANCIS,
Director,
Public Relations,

Australian Film Commission.
David Gipper is his comments on the Australian Opera's performances of

but we do need more money. On the one hand, to find "commando troops" to take theatre to schools and community groups. There is just such an enormous potential audience in educational establishments who need to be brought into contact with theatre. On the other hand, our small staff is working for wages that are far below parity with those of similar jobs, trades and crafts outside the industry.

"It's continuing to develop and change as running as smoothly as ever, even if in a more time-consuming way. Each director likes to have a set period off each season — but I think this year I'll be hard pressed to find a stop."

OPERA POST

Peter Henningsen has been appointed general manager of the Australian Opera, the appointment being effective from October.

CHARLES J. BORG, chairman, Australian Opera, comments: "Peter Henningsen had a brilliant career and can go no further in private in Britain, having been at Sadler's Wells, that general administrator of Scottish Opera.

"With double the budget of Scottish Opera available to him here, we are confident his presence will help further develop and consolidate Australian Opera."

"There is no one available as present in Australia with such wealth of experience and ability (apart from John Webster, who resigned recently). We are delighted that Peter Henningsen will be joining us."

Carsten J. Madsen, Associate, Feb/March, writes of the conductor Russell Ch��ell "deserving the surname of this applause!" I was not present at the performance in question, but would nevertheless condone your reviewer's "star performer" attitude, which can only reduce the presentation of my opera to a series of virtuous displays. Even an opera such as *Carries*, with its number of set-pieces, benefits immeasurably by being allowed its dramatic and musical continuity to be preserved, unhampered by the bouts of static clapping so beloved of the Sydney opera set. No work is left untouched over the middle-eight and readily disturbed clapping does that same chord, or cause the singers seem to have raised their larynx temporarily, or once the curtain makes the slightest motion in a detectable direction, down go the chandeliers, and they're off. Any music that happens to be playing at the time is, of course, lost. And Mr Gipper apparently seeks to perpetuate this behaviour and its continuity by shifting a conductor who "preses on regardless of the fact that the singer and audience were insensitive to the audience". I trust that when we are told that Mr Ch��ell "settled down as the afternoon progressed", that does not mean that he gave up the struggle. I can only hope, despite the enormous odds, that other conductors take up the challenge.

BRIAN FITZGERALD, Neutral Bay, NSW.

Theatre Forum '77

This year's 'Playwrights' Conference now called *Theatre Forum* will be held at the A.N.U. Canberra from 15-29 May. It looks like being the most exciting yet as Richard Wherrett, the artistic director, and Bill Shanahan, the administrator explain.

It has become clear at the course of the four conferences that the event exists on a far wider scale than just the workshopping of plays. It is a coming together of all the personnel in theatre in Australia, hence, we have settled on a new title for this year's conference: *Theatre Forum*.

The workshopping of plays remains the central focus point of the event, around which seminars, discussions and additional play-readings take place.

The aim of the conference is to give promising new writers practical playwriting skills by working on their scripts with top professional actors and directors in the rehearsal situation. Scripts

are submitted to the conference playwriting committee from all over Australia, and from these, a final six are chosen for workshop at the conference. This year, however, eight plays will be workshopped, four being one-act plays and four full-length plays. In addition, new playwrights whose plays have not been chosen for workshopping, but whose work, it is felt, shows talent, are invited to attend the conference as observers to the workshop programme. The opportunity to attend the conference as a playing observer is also open to any member of the public.

The conference committee feels that the work it is doing is of great importance, not only because of the training and practical

experience that it affords new playwrights, but also because it brings the playwright into contact with professional people who will be able to help and guide him in the future. As well, it brings members of the profession together for stimulation and the exchange of ideas — an exchange which, given Australia's geographical problems, would be otherwise impossible.

In terms of these areas of activity, this year's conference is shaping up as one of the most exciting yet.

The 12 plays submitted were of a particularly high standard, and the final selection includes such notable writers as Steven J. Spears, Kenneth Rose, Roger Polovin and Tim Gossling. Plays to be work-

National Theatre Awards



The 1976 National Theatre Awards will be presented at the 1977 Theatre Forum, National Playwrights' Conference, 18 May. These are to be professional awards voted on by the votes of members of the theatre industry. Actors, directors, designers, writers and stage crew are therefore asked to vote on the nominations listed below, which are the result of a national poll of votes. There is an area for those who wish to vote for someone other than those nominated.

Postal returns after 10 May 1977 cannot be considered.

If you are eligible to vote, fill in the form below (or make out a list) and post to: 1976 National Theatre Awards

Theatre Australia

7 Pershore Place

New Lexington Heights

N.S.W. 2006

If you are not eligible to vote, you may still wish to fill in the form and keep it so that you can compare your selections with the results of the poll.

BEST ACTOR		BEST ACTRESS		BEST DIRECTOR	
ACTOR NOMINATIONS		ACTRESS NOMINATIONS		DIRECTOR NOMINATIONS	
<input type="checkbox"/> Alan Curnow	<input type="checkbox"/> Peter Hough	<input type="checkbox"/> John Merton	<input type="checkbox"/> Michael Morris	<input type="checkbox"/> John Nathan	<input type="checkbox"/> Alan Aldred
<input type="checkbox"/> Geoff Carter	<input type="checkbox"/> Joan Selsky	<input type="checkbox"/> Peter Saville	<input type="checkbox"/> Karen Neary	<input type="checkbox"/> Mark Rudiger	<input type="checkbox"/> Rodney Taylor
<input type="checkbox"/> Malcolm Runkle	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> ACTRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> DIRECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> ACTOR	<input type="checkbox"/> ACTRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> DIRECTOR
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

shopped at this year's conference are:

Rose's Public Agony at the Windy Mate, by Kenneth Rose, *King Richard*, by Steve J. Suddick, *Marktgeist*, by Tim Goding; *Measurements*, by Malcolm Farley, *Em*, by Timothy Morell, *The Two-Play Mirror*, by Debbie Oswald, *Devon Girl*, by Ruth Hartman, *Feminism*, by Roger Purcell.

Actors participating in this year's conference include some of the top names in Australian Theatre: Jacki Weaver, Monica Maughan, Kate McQuade, Angela Punch, Janice Dean, Celia De Bore, Chris Haywood, Tony Llewellyn-Jones, Kevin Miles, Kate Ramsay, Alan Edwards and David Waters.

The artistic director of the Queensland Theatre Company, Alan Edwards, and author-director Ken Blaize are two of the four directors who will lead the workshopping of the plays at this year's conference.

Dramaturges assisting the new playwrights include current Australian playwright Dorothy Heyman and the chairman of the playwrighting committee of the conference, Helen van der Poorten.

The conference is particularly honoured

to have among its special guests John Osborne, one of Britain's most distinguished playwrights for more than 20 years, whose plays include *Alice Blue in August*, *The Entertainer*, *Looker*, *A Patriot for Me*, *West of Scotts*, and more recently, *Watch It Come Down*.

We are also excited to have one of Britain's most controversial playwrights of the seventies, Howard Brenton, author of *Caesar in Love*, *Revenge*, *Measuremen*, a contemporary adaptation of *Measure for Measure* and *Wrecks of Happiness* which was commissioned by the National Theatre in 1973.

As Osborne attained his prominence through the Royal Court Theatre in London, so has Howard Brenton who was resident director of the Royal Court in 1972-3.

Other guests to be confirmed are Helen Dawson, former drama critic of the London *Observer* and *Play and Pages*, Helen Mantena, general manager of H. M. Tancred (London), and Robin Dalton, a leading literary agent. Negotiations continue for another guest, hopefully from America or Europe.

The programme of the conference in-

cludes a daily seminar on all aspects of theatre production, politics and policies. Some of the proposed subjects for discussion are:

- a *Artist without Union*
- b *Playwrights — Percentages and Promotions*
- c *The Fringe*
- d *The Critic's Forum*
- e *The Relationship between Unions and Management*

Speakers at seminars will include John Bell, Katherine Bushell, Alan Bass, Graeme Blundell, Hilary Linstead, Kip Parrotas, Ken Southgate, John Tonkin and David Williamson.

This year, in conjunction with the conference, the Australian Film and Television School will hold a workshop on all aspects of writing for the visual media. Participants in both conferences will gain freely and have opportunities to exchange ideas on formal and informal levels.

The conference will welcome any inquiries from interested parties. These inquiries should be made to Bill Sharman, Old Town Linstead, P O Box 39, Beaconsfield, NSW, 2019. Tel. 699 9323.

PLAY DIRECTORS

- Bill Dowd
- Graham MacKenzie
-

BEST NEW TALENT

- Steven Land
- Maxine Jones
- Colleen

BEST NEW PLAY

- Animal Farm/ The Trial
- Handful of Friends
-

WILLING TO ACT

- Peter Compton
- Carol Power
- Kenneth Roffe
- Tony Tripp
-

- Lotty Clancy
- Peaches in Crime
- Glory Poles
- Sissons
-

- Evelyn Poole
- Handful of Friends
- Other Times
- A Town to Make
-

WILLING TO ACT

- Adelle Hinchliffe
- Maxine Curran
- Peter McBlair
-

- Play of Bone
- Gervi Spurts
- Broken Defense
-

- Young Me —
- Handful of Friends
- Brothers
-

WILLING TO ACT

- Jennifer Lorraine
- Peter Cook
- James Robertson
-

- Rock'n' Roll
- David Bell
- Jennifer Phoenix
- Pat Thompson
-

- The Department
- Mud, Red and
- Daughters in Crime
- A Town to Make
-

WILLING TO ACT

- David Bassett
- Wendy Dakin
- Lotty Lorraine
- Doug Krapman
-

- Lotta Design
- Jennifer McElroy
- Elizabeth Marney
- Steven Spurts
-

- Rosemary Franklin
- Handful of Friends
- Red States
- A Town to Make
-

Name _____

Address _____

Professional Status

(actor, writer, director etc.)

ON THE ADELAIDE



"The sadness . . . is that no one had the courage to design a theatre that took account of the age we live in"

A t my official introduction to the Festival Centre when only the main hall struggled to cope with every art form from symphony to opera to ballet to drama, to chamber music and solo concert, was as wise, I was, I thought just and modest in my praise. Then I found, not always the ultimate Adelaide residents enjoy in a seasonal centre.

When, some time after, I came over to inspect the almost-superb drama spaces of the centre, the Playhouse, and others, a little later again, I came to the opening performance in the theatre I was even more modest in praise.

Those attached to the Playhouse had had me around exhaustively, and when I was most impressed and full of praise for the luxury of the backstage accommodation for the players, and for the grand scale of the theatre director's permanent production and staging areas, the theatre itself left me depressed.

Filled with details of the fly tower, of how capacious the grid was, of how many

sets could be drawn, shown (he committed, the clear floor of the stage ("No recesses or any of that unnecessary nonsense"), and also noting for myself the audibility of the theatre, I came away more than a little sad.

As so often in this country, great sums of money had been spent by people not truly fitted for their design tasks.

Just as I had earlier offended the then chairman of the Festival Trust by saying that his beloved double scalped on the main ground-floor promenade looked exactly like dignified oysters for the audience, I now upped some of the Playhouse cast by my opinion that it will certainly be the best Victorian theatre built in Australia for a hundred years.

I have not produced in the Playhouse, and am never likely to, but in the practical terms of present-day theatre I have no doubt it all works very well. The sadness to my mind is that no one had the courage to design a theatre that took account of the age we live in. I am not saying that, because the majority of the population is now bewitched to the light show and subtle playing of the best television, live theatre should reproduce this. But being part of the action, feeling

the involvement of the audience, and the two shot, appreciating the fine gradations of acting and communication that human achieve — these are all qualities of the drama that a modern theatre should note.

All manner of ways of changing the audience relationship can be managed these days: a number of stages can be made to revolve around a static audience; the audience can revolve around a stage; can you roll and tilt seating as desired; there can be several concentric circles seating an audience which can revolve in different directions, and at different levels if need be — some looking down on stage, some looking up. Closed circuit TV, multi-channel sound in the theatre itself, all are possible.

The variations and arrangements can be an endless game, but I am sure that somewhere amongst all these options of room or a possible "modern" theatre lies a design that will give new and major challenges to playwrights. When O'Neill tried, in *Surrey Island*, to bring all a chaotic level of communication he could only do it by continuous noise, not easy to make work. Modern sound systems could do it with less disturbance to stage.

That is a part of what I feel about the Playhouse, as well as subsequent theatre complexes such as Sydney's more recent Seymour Centre. They have no modernity. The audience of 1920 would have been perfectly comfortable in them.

Architect, George Molnar

FESTIVAL CENTRE



"The shapes are clear, sharply defined against the sky, white, joyful."

This article is an architectural summing-up of the Festival Theatre.

History The Festival Centre will house the National Adelaide Festival. The site was chosen in 1969, work began in 1976, the Festival Theatre was opened in 1979. The architects were Hassell and Partners. Funds were provided mainly by the South Australian Government.

Design One of the problems of designing a theatre is integrating the stage house into the general composition of the building. The facade usually encloses boxes. They are human spaces, of human scale and architectural expression.

The stagehouse is an alien shape, windowless, abstract, dominant. The classical solution used to be either to force it under the same roof as the theatre or to express it in the same architectural terms and scale as the facade.

At the Festival Theatre the stagehouse is clearly stated as a form of an oval. So is the auditorium. The building is a composition of two volumes, brought

together by the central, horizontal lines of the plan.

The shapes are clear, sharply defined against the sky, white, joyful. With the Playhouse they form a cluster of gleaming concrete tents indicated by the surrounding trees of the park. They are associated with sedate, joyous, celebrations. They are good forms to suggest a sense of festivity.

From the white tents long white lines of terraces descend towards the green lawns and the river. It's a happy landscape.

There is a place for ornament. Some details like the balustrade — and this applies to the interior, too — are too heavy. People seem to be secondary to the stage. The intersections of concrete planes which form the tents — plinths which should have a tapering quality — are made with tamed borders. The concept of the simple shape loses its simplicity. The surfaces look put together.

The edges courage at two points. It was a frightening moment when I saw the roofs as roofs of an immense baby carriage I am trying to forget.

The Play The place is constructed of meadowgrass. A tapering column with cantilevered boxes carries a platform. I hope the unit is self-supporting and does not rely for stability on connection with other units, though the shape suggests

otherwise. It would be nice to see some of them standing alone, where shelter is needed, isolated nodes of a tree.

They're simple, dignified and useful. They will give order and architectural unity to spaces to be created when functions related to the theatre will spill in any case into the volume of the tent (See remarks on kitchen below).

Only two stairs lead down from the plaza to the gardens. This makes the terraces isolated. I would have liked to see a closer relationship, of results of stairs overflowing the terraces, everywhere, making the gardens an extension of the plaza. Maybe they will come. Terraces, stairs, pencil stems, trees, what a splendid world of festivity that would be.

Foyers The lobbies surround the auditoriums from all sides. They follow the balconies on the upper levels. It is all one space, under the sloping roof of the main structure.

There is ample room to move around. There are views of buildings, beyond, of the plaza, of the park, and lights, and of the audience illuminated against them. A forced scale of few details. Strong, simple colours, red, white and black. It has a festive atmosphere of expectancy.

Yet it is an undefined space, rather restless. There again like the plaza the different levels of the auditoriums are isolated, the only link between them is the main stairs at the front. A series of stairs in the side bays would have created a unified

and dramatic place, a great stage setting for the audience to perform on during the intervals.

Auditorium. It's a multi-purpose hall, at least in the Continental way about 2,000, in stalls, two balconies, and boxes. No seat is further away from the stage than 100 feet. Visibility from every seat is good. The theatre is horseshoe shaped. A wide band of secondary rooms, entrances, stairs, steps, lobbies, isolates the auditorium from the noise of the foyers.

It is a splendid space. Passing the brownish clouds of walls and ceiling, the illuminated spaceships (boxes) dashed on the makes less of crimson sunset (seats). We are in a world where anything may happen. *Metamorphosis*.

But do we Australians take our houses too seriously? The architecture is brown, the hall beautiful and the details horrendous. Maybe it is my being indoctrinated to interiors where banquette pleaser ladies carry the load of the architectural design that I find the hall just a bit sober. Oh, for a gesture of frivolity in our interiors for spectators. But not Mine, please.

Stage and Orchestra. The stage areas from the proscenium opening — which can vary from 40 feet to 51 feet to suit all sorts of productions — are traditional. No mechanical tricks, all society in these blue chairs in ample underbank areas surrounding the seating stage, and storage spaces under it, extremely valuable for repertory production. Technical consultant was Tom Brown, working at present on Sir Ray Connolly's Melbourne Cultural Centre.

The orchestra pit holds 40 players. Full orchestra for concerts can have 300 musicians and a choir of 300. The

orchestra shell, which transforms the stage from a theatre into a concert hall is flown and can be put in position in two hours. Turn the set the shell are erected in one day.

Acoustics. The hall has adjustable acoustics, to suit sound required. According to the acoustical consultant, Fryer, Goodall and Duncan, the concert hall configuration with the shell in place gives a reverberation time of two seconds. For opera (small cast, an orchestra of 45) the time was 1.5. I am not very musical and used my better prosecco judgement. All I can say is that the opera I've heard never sounded better. One of them, *The Marriage of Figaro*. I heard a number of times before by the same cast in different theatres and I thought their voices had improved greatly. Over to Mr. Cawell?

Bar and Foyer. Return to relax and watch the world around. Glass walls give views of the glistening foyers and Addicks sitting in the darkness. But those horizontal, suspended beams, supporting sparse light fittings, must be removed, removed fast, and forgotten.

Both rooms are up to their full capacity on important occasions, and I am sure the kitchen is about to burst at its seams. Another set of glass doors must be installed to stop my delights from the hills freezing doors already is bad temper due to floating beams and inscrutable feed.

Art. There will be plenty of art at the Festival Theatre. Adorning the walls of present is a tapestry by John Coburn and murals by Sidney Nolan and Fred Williams. Excellent as they are as works of art, they are all wrong here.

There has nothing to do with their appointments. But in a building where the play of

lights is as formal as you just don't hang pictures for decoration. Even if they are of the size of Sidney Nolan's "Stoker", made up of 124 panels of giant aboriginal, to be viewed from a distance of two feet.

Picture for the foyer should be in harmony with the architecture, in size, design, colour, surfaces. They should be part of the concept of space.

This happens since "The status of Man" by the entrancor foyer shows complete unity between architecture and sculpture.

It started with a delightful architectural mistake. The first landing of the grand staircase at three unconnected levels into the foyer to give more space below. Unfortunately this space had a headroom of six feet only, clearly dangerous on a world of growing youth. So far safety means the space had to be made unusable. This was done by commissioning the status that looks like a heap of heat air-conditioning to fill the space it does.

Summary. The Festival Theatre is an excellent building, the Festival Centre will be one of the most interesting new spaces of our times. The concept is simple, robust and inspiring. Wish it Addicks has established itself as truly the Festival City of Australia.

POVYAT'CHI. Readers may notice that nowhere on this article has any reference, allusion, comparison been made to the Sydney Opera House. It was a serious

■ This article first appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald and is published with the Herald's permission. George Molnar is Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of New South Wales and is a Board member.



Just Ruth



A one-woman show for Ruth Cracknell is in preparation. Some of the sketches will be contributed by Ruth herself; others by noted Australian playwrights.

I first saw Ruth Cracknell in *Madam Corbett* in Sydney. It was a public dress rehearsal at the middle of which the actress performer did a "double take" (as I recall it was a "double take") in the last performance — for when her character was conversed with her — standing on either side of her. The comic expertise of this particular piece of "business" dazzled in the manner only a few performers, such as Jacques Tati or Charlie Chaplin, achieve. The fact that I instinctively grasp for comparison, action both associated with named visual effect is significant, having just directed Ruth in *Mrs Coulson in The School for Scandal*, I can testify to her skill in delivering Sheridan's elaborate dialogue and drinking a cup of tea/coffee at the same time, so that the action underscores and helps to punctuate the spoken word. In her performance, Mrs Coulson's passion for gossip veers towards the manic as she discusses each new scandalous item like a half-mad valentine. As she swags around the stage, an immediate hold by her intensity — a word I used earlier about Ruth that the contrastive should be present in her work of Madame Raemsky in *The Cherry Orchard* (one in rehearsal) are anticipated; one was all too prepared for the depth of feeling and nuance that this performer can also offer.

Such a preamble to *Just Ruth* my soon presented to Ruth (the only introduction I can offer Talking with Ruth after *Madam Corbett* in Sydney), we found we shared much common theatre interest — and admired the sort of theatrical approach or "philosophy" exemplified by the late Sir Tyrone Guthrie. I can assure you here was no Australian performer denied the anguish and opportunity that the English drama and television world offers — merely by virtue of its status (Who else to say that in England, Ruth would not have her own television series?)

From my point of view as the newly appointed director of the SATC, I needed something contemporary for our first season, something Australian, something to help balance a steady, classical programme. Together with another new play, a show written by Ruth, and for Ruth by Australian writers, united the sort of challenge a subsidised company should stretch up to satisfactorily.

As I write, our mutual obsession is the act that is sounding through *The Cherry Orchard* again; however, we shall be writing and reading with a host of different characters (so very different, perhaps, many the creation of Ruth's own fertile imagination, others conjured up by

writers such as David Williamson, Michael Cane, Peter Yeldham, Alex Bass, Ron Blair and John Moulder. What work we choose, who we cast, what ideas we expand, what suggestions we put to stage, will depend on the inspiration and illustration of a month's intense rehearsal — always in the shadow of the evening magic of Chekhov. This is useful I think, to work on something new in the theatre while performing a theatrical masterpiece at nightfall, to any profession, and can actually sharpen one's awareness. These in four of Ruth's "sketches" will be holding forth and weaving their way through *Just Ruth*. The balloon of the project will be puffed, the harassed and the bewildered find a voice, and the Poet receives hearty applause. (What else can you do when you director and designer are English?) As the piano will be Sybil Graham to add invaluable contribution when required and the gits of the evening will be Australian — it may be impossible as that "tribute" note. With some of the critics in Adelaide positively clamouring for "relevance", and the audience anywhere out-response to the atmosphere, a producer's built around a solo performer can effectively focus on the contemporary scene. If some of our rehearsal is spent ransacking the local papers for themes and ideas, we are in good company. Chekhov did the same thing.

So ends my question, but some of those who have offered contributions, Peter Yeldham, Michael Cane, David Williamson and Alex Bass have written about their individual perspectives. Their thoughts are an indication of the evening's, like Chekhov's, "variety".

The idea for *Fields of Difference* was easy enough to come by, and the actual authorship of the play presented, as it turned out, equalled problems.

I should say that *Fields of Difference* is the title of a 15-minute scene that I wrote up for the *Just Ruth* show. Colm George, when at *Australia*, commissioned a two-woman play which turned out to be *Family Ties*. The Jewish themes appealed to him (and to me), and when we discussed my writing a scene for Ruth Cracknell, it was fairly obvious that the idea of a Jewish character should be resisted.

Now, writing for a known performer makes selection of material in some ways simple. I didn't think of a traditional Jewish scenario, a "holocaust", when I thought of Ruth's face but another sort of Jewish woman was suggested and Fields is that person.

I took the commission to write for *Just Ruth* mainly because of the political challenges inherent in it. First, and most obviously, the business of writing a monologue. As it happened, I didn't find special problems in this, although I was

never I should be able to provide a theory about the problems of the dynamics of one-person scenes. (And, sorry, I had the same disappointment in writing *The Goy*, I can myself act up for the challenge of writing a two-hander, but forget about it. If the one person is right, the scene happens. If the entire *South Australian* has nothing to offer, all their flax and drama won't help.)

I've already mentioned one advantage of writing for a known performer, another, in the case of *Just Ruth*, was the advantage of knowing that the performer who is the subject of the exercise is very good. I tried this then created something but doesn't change my approach to the job. I always write to the expectation of getting a very good cast (which may be one reason why I have usually got one), a good director (which) in the simple belief that if you're a professional then you have a right (though I daresay) to expect a professional job to be done on and with your work.

One point, I, personally, can't help a smacking, bawling, rather noisy stocking that when the work is up to me on stage than an ability of compunction from the audience, for example, "Whose did you like best?" (except in Theatre does I need it, and care as hell, it doesn't. That's one thought that's been with me, and a less consciousness result of writing for *Just Ruth* makes, and then a machine couldn't possibly be wrong. Australian computers are bad enough, but for several years I have had a running battle with a German computer. This general machine is owned and operated by the German tax office (Munich, obviously), and every month it sends me a statement for tax, a claim I owe on German play royalties. It is pointless for me to write and explain that this was paid by my German agents. I've tried that, and the fucking machine simply sends off another demand on the first of the following month. I tried writing to it, by writing a letter starting "Dear Computer", but this was obviously ignored. However, I feel we may be achieving some sort of symbiotic relationship. For in January, when I received my regular reminder alongside the amounts which the computer claims I owe, were printed the words: "Happy New Year."

So when Ruth and Colm asked me to write for her forthcoming show, what emerged was a sketch called *Dear Computer* — about *Mrs Lexington*. *Mrs Lexington* is a rather harassed and over- upon lady who has received an enormous bill from the gas board's computer. Apart from that, she has had trouble with her husband, and the postman, and her mother-in-law. *Mrs Lexington* is a character I'd like to develop further some time. Perhaps in a full-length play. But only if Ruth is available to play it. Because to me, she has that rare quality, when she walks on to a stage, of arousing in the audience a feeling of comic expectation. I think she is one of the true originals of the Australian theatre.

When I was asked to write for Ruth by Colm George, I immediately agreed, partly out of admiration for her great talent and partly out of gratitude for her superb and definitive performance as *Irene* in my play. What if you died tomorrow? I asked Ruth for some guidelines for the piece and she suggested I do an Irene-type character, which I thought would be easy, but three days later all I'd achieved was a pile of second-rate *Footloose* and a significant deterioration in household harmony. The reason for my inability to write the piece was probably that Irene's character as the play had been defined by her interaction with the characters around her, and without those characters I couldn't realize her. It was a salutary lesson in the difficulty of writing for a solo performer.

I finally created two new characters for Ruth: one conversing with an imagined second person, the other directly addressing an audience. But the exercise was far more difficult than I'd imagined, and Ruth tried the pieces, I was the official score whether I've been successful.

After trying to write a fairly decent catch-all rever end-of-year sketch and failing at it, I ended up writing a playlet that had been brewing in my mind for some time. It's an interesting that only Ruth Cracknell could perform though she seems best equipped to do it. The final result is surreal rather than the blackout techniques promoted by Phillip King and Maxine Branson. It uses fantasy and shock to explore a state of mind rather than proceed along the path from A to Z. It's also a bit bizarre.

Community projects can be rewarding and sometimes inspire well-crafted words, but when they shake out something that has been going around looking for an outlet, they can be great.

The only problem with *Accidentalism* in Australia is that it is understood only by the well-educated and the educated. The Accidental debate is largely conducted by the well-educated and remains at the 1946 level, when writers were supposed to paint a man that looked like a man and Cubists were instructed to be painted and killed. Images that surround us in Australia had written *Waiting for Godot* in 1952. You, in my infinite opinion, the aborigines were an influence on Australian writing in the 1960s and the ideas and techniques of journalism continue to research both the mainstream and political/experimental strands of Australian drama now.

DEADLY ACCURATE

— that's Cracknell

"This is a formidable and remarkable lady, fascinating to talk to . . ."

Miss Ruth Cracknell, whose title as first lady of the Australian stage could be challenged only by Edna Ferber or Betty Markham, was surrounded by all manner of her early life — if I recollect rightly. From these walls, where she feels may not have been so tight and firm as once she thought them, actress Ruth Cracknell has drawn magnificent references over the years.

It was perhaps two years back that I laughed with Miss Cracknell in Sydney, and sang after a brilliantly funny cabaret revue season at Bill O'Leary's Loft in Manly. She was about to go into something much more serious and serious at the Old Time Theatre in Sydney, we merrily talked about from where she drew her famous wavy hair, those nursing sisters with pouty lips and glaring eyes, or the fey housewives who — after using a soft machine technique on her husband — would fade and dissolve into the dark into a soft and passionate television fantasy. The wives and their acquaintances had some relationship to those deadly and accurate styles of women.

jobs to interview Cracknell. She will not, simply will not, talk about directors, or fellow-players sweep off the record — and the Ruth Cracknell way of asking for dialogue to be off the record is polite, but very eyeball-to-eyeball with a cluster of the raving mouth and as well by her is now, and the whisks of the sharper very close to one's ear.

In other words, this is a really formidable and remarkable lady, fascinating to talk to since her own offbeat and charming personality rates quite consistently along with the skilled and quizzing actress that she is.

There are no tricks in turning of a profile, no random expectation of recognition by the theatregoer. What there is in the free player a knowing of a good gesture or expression — instantly take up, repeated ad infinitum — perhaps practised in shadow once or twice, then out to the full cabinet, down with the seats.

The Cracknell repertoire is too long to list. Miss Cracknell has played everything from As You Like It to David Williamson. Mostly she has been one of the excellent players of the cast, when she has (as happens even to an Olivier) not taken the eye, it has in my experience always been a deserved fault.

Two well-remembered and selected to name, as Edna Evans reportedly did to a young producer, "Young man, you are here to tell us the time and to bring cups of tea", Cracknell has suffered in silence

Modifying an earlier statement, there are two choices about whom she will speak, Tyrone Guthrie and Colin George. She first worked with Guthrie when the late grand dame produced *Dracula* for the Old Time Theatre. He was the only director who made her feel part of a cherished estate. "If he had finished with me for the day, he would come and say, is that lovely gentle way he had, like a high priest of theatre, that he didn't need me. Some of our younger men would just keep us hanging about the studio for hours and hours, a sort of power exercise."

In Adelaide for a two-play season, with a one-woman show to follow, Cracknell is a most pleasant and relaxed mood. The human side of Adelaide helps this, of course, but she is also finding once again some real challenge in her theatrical life, different from the Guthrie contact but perhaps more stimulating, since it is over a longer stretch of time.

The Colin George way with his company, as I learned from quite a talking, Cracknell description, is unusual and interesting — when placed amongst the usual Australian theatre experience.

"We have transparency morning, noon, noonish, sometimes related — generally in a pretty subtle way — to the play we're rehearsing," she said. "Colin teach it all, perceives entirely. We're a bunch of professionals really working out."

"It is my turn for the initial effort of the morning. I probably have to shut my eyes, maybe imagine that I am a hooker, a concubine, and have to make my way — still blind — towards some centre of friendship. Perhaps I will fly to the moon and try to experience that landscape. Anything at all."

"Colin changes the various scenes about, and our activities. We might spend time throwing a ball just on one syllable. When I'm in class, I suddenly realize the cleverness of the man he is putting me into situations that may have as surface relevance to *The School for Scandal*, but there is also a turn that is *Chakhe*. While I am thinking in terms of Shostak he has me also stretching towards *The Cherry Orchard*."

My opinion was that such stretching sessions of training were pretty much what the local stage has suffered the lack of, too many players feeling that further learning and routine classroom were irrelevant to artists of their standing.

This is where Ruth Cracknell believes that a special light shines from Colin George. "You can sense the way all the expertise with in making you run better. And

then there's the challenge of mapping out a company such as the SATC that has been solving its problems for years now. They are all together. I found that beginning to work with them was a challenge as big as any I've had."

"More than again to the Colin George training sessions. We been able to get to work with the rest of the company very quickly and smoothly. There's nothing quite like being all performing students together."

On my previous meeting with Miss Cracknell, she raised a notion that very few girls for women in the middle ages range have been written by Australian playwrights. Agreeing that this was one of the richest areas of women to write about, I suggested that she should commission a playwright or so to write a play suitable for her. Her response? "I'll always be too shy even to talk to writers — to alone offer them money to do a play for me."

In Adelaide, I wondered if in fact Cracknell had done anything about the notion. "I will not say, but hardly enough, since I've been working here, Colin had the idea of writing a one-woman show around me, covering, probably, various types of women. He's got Ron Blair and Michael Caine both doing material for it, plus my own bits and pieces. So, in a way, something has been done."

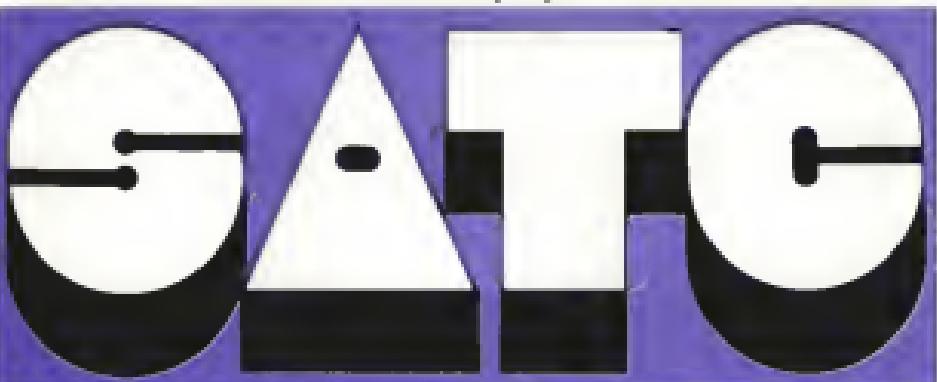
The life of her family is an important part of the Cracknell experience. With her husband, Miss Cracknell runs a picture-framing and art-goods business in Sydney ("I'm looking around Adelaide with a business eye, there may be chance here") and she has three children to ponder. A photograph produced yesterday showed an eighteen-year-old daughter as beautiful and alive as Miss Cracknell was herself at that physically pre-theatre age.

In Adelaide until 2 May after, there will be time for at least some family visiting. Her husband will be over most often, and sustained contact with her personal life is obviously a great pleasure.

In Adelaide, a city she is growing increasingly fond of — because of its scale, and the people — Cracknell is trying to a model converted from an older-style mansion. There is room for wide corridors, and sitting rooms, a garden to walk in. It is also an easy walk from the theatre and its rehearsals.

Here was a lady of the theatre very comfortably established in a strange city working harder than for some time — these days the Cracknell reputation is such that she does nothing she does not positively want to do — touched with an early affection for the style and pace of Adelaide.

Would she stay in the elegant city? "It depends on the season," came the complex theatrical reply.



Peter Ward surveys the chequered history of the SATC — and detects a hopeful change of mood

The father of the South Australian Theatre Company is the modest, large-shouldered, unostentatious, energetic and generous Colin Bellantyne, its chairman, now and, one trusts, for a long time to come.

Why should I open a paean on the history of the South Australian Theatre Company with such an ambiguous accolade?

It is because he is the father of the company in a quite positive, distinctive sense, and the fact that he had to be an pragmatist rather than an first artistic director, or whatever, is part of the history of early and mid 20th Century Australian theatre and needs to be told elsewhere.

Let it be enough to say this. Colin Bellantyne is a non-peer — one could not, at his peak, call him "amateur" — producer-director of live drama in South Australia, kept the flag of the art flying in that interregnum between the flag-days of music-hall and variety, that died from the impact of the movies, and the beginning of television.

The reason simply that the standards had to be maintained, and only dedicated people could do it in these years of gross commercialism.

Bellantyne's dedication of the avocation, together with his wide reading on theatre, and blood, sweat and tears, kept it all together, taught two generations of actors, and influenced a young lawyer who was later to be Premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan.

But more than that. He influenced in a fundamental way others to the Project, the dragon-adjured of the Playhouse Theatre, Tom Brown, artist, who in the SATC, has always taken a central role, like Teddyl Hodgeon and Leslie Dwyer, and indeed a whole climate of opinion and feeling that has led to the kind of cultural phenomenon Adelaide is today.

Bellantyne, in turn, was himself influenced by his wife Gweneth, who has always taken a back seat, but whose judg-

ment was critically esteemed to some, if not most, of his key decisions, as a troubadour-predictor of children's theatre in her own right, and as an actress, she educated a complete generation of college theatre-goers.

And the two of them, by teaching, example, and general sense of the theatrical fitness of things, assisted in creating a record that, from about 1948 on, culminated in a kind of "survived belief" that Adelaide in particular and Australian theatre in general would never properly reach the outer limits of the theatre arts until there was some kind of subsidy public or private, and until there were proper theatres in which to play public or private.

The young pitifulian Dunstan developed many of his commitments from the early forties and fifties, and not only the political but also the cultural notions that were then current. He knew the Bellantynes and, He had himself obtained a young for radio, and as a result joined Action Equity, a union to which he still proudly belongs, a being convenient for a Labor Premier and only to bring in a wage, but also to one that rather necessarily projects him to work on the shop-floor areas, in the hubs of striking at, as it were, the drop of the curtain.

And so (all this being a matter of acting the scene), enter the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the old and now so old boughts of Adelaide.

Notwithstanding the dominant position that Bellantyne had created for himself in formulating the effective theatre life of the State, the movement towards a State subsidised theatre company occurred outside his journalistic orbit, though in the occupied climate to had helped to create

The first South Australian Theatre Company was established in 1963 by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust as part of its regional drama company policy.

And in the winter of the trust at the time, a board of management was formed with members representing the trust, the Adelaide City Council, the State Education Department and the ABC. It was, with one or two exceptions, a comfortable Miss Elliot. Everyone knew nearly everyone else, several knew something about theatre, and all firmly believed that they knew better what the community, or art, wanted.

Then John Tinkler, the company's first resident producer, was presented from the start. Chaste words perhaps, but I was there at the time, and saw it happen. The reason that John Tinkler found himself in, rather in the same way as the role that Colin Bellantyne played in a producer in Adelaide is essential to an understanding of what the SATC is today.

John Tinkler had arrived on the job by way of being French White's favorite producer-director, in the balmy, bushy early sixties. It was not a recommendation. Many of the members of Tinkler's board were closely associated with the board of the Adelaide Festival of Arts, which in those days was making a habit of sending White's plays morally suspect. (The same board rejected Alan Seymour's *One Day of The Year* on the ground that it was potentially subversive because it displayed *Antic Disposition* in an unfavourable light.) So a somewhat flamboyant young producer with a floppy tongue and, for the board, an unusual lifestyle, was held at arm's length and eventually administered out of the way.

For Tinkler, the two-and-a-half-year struggle was a scarring thing, but the achievement was, for the time, considerable, one of the high points of which was a superb production of Peter Shaffer's *Roost House of the Sun* for the fourth Adelaide Festival of Arts in Adelaide University's much-prized Great Hall. It was a swishing spectacle marked only by

The School for Scandal: Ruth Crickell as Mrs. Clarendon.



the hundred multi-talented units, and not of those theatrical moments that an memory longer to be savoured.

Tucker's repartee included Dartmouth, Alton, Alan Hopgood, Shakespeares (the schools), Dubarry, Hatchett, and Foster. He gathered around him a small nucleus of players, some of whom still remain members of the company.

Through frustration by the meddling of his board, the shortage of funds (in 1971 the ETTC's guarantee was \$16,000), and a succession of inadequate theatre and rehearsal rooms, Tucker's achievement was remarkable, to the extent that when he was finally administered out of the company, one of the most assessed observers was the Premier, Don Dunstan, then in the first flush of office, shortly to be defeated in the polls but to return to government in 1970.

It was as a direct result of the situation John Tucker found himself in that not only did Don Dunstan make the establishment of the SATC as a statutory body part of his election platform in 1968 and 1972, but also that when finally the government gave the company its parliamentary charter in 1973, the position of artistic director — his autonomy in production matters, and his general pre-eminence — was quite specifically entrenched and unassured by contract. The consequences of that situation are still being worked out, for good or ill.

Leslie Dymant, now a partner with the company, took over as the company's resident producer in 1968 and continued in

his continuing position for two years. Dymant's direction rated more praise of Leslie as the company than Tucker's. He was less dominant, and in his role mainly in holding together, now and possibly fragile together. He did so, added to some extent by the advent of the Australian Council for the Arts, whose subsidy, together with that of the trust, allowed for the appointment of a resident designer and contracted players. The Adelaide City Council also helped in providing rehearsal rooms above the city vegetable market stalls, a symbolic gesture, some thought, for a company that had the choice of either vegetating or growing.

At Bay in the Beach of the Egg, Joyce, The Alchemist, The Real Imperial Hound, East the King and The Cavalier, together with a shortened version of Pygmalion for schools in the city and country areas were presented during the period, keeping the company's presence in the city alive.

Finally, as its contribution to the tenth Adelaide Festival of Arts, English actor-producer Peter Collingwood was invited to produce The Seagull with the company's nucleus augmented by junior actors from other regional Australian theatre companies. It was generally regarded as a successful production.

By 1973 changes in the company's board, a general managerial change-of-heart, and the prospect of a change in State Government, all compounded to create a generally more relaxed atmosphere. Leslie Dymant stepped down from his position and Peter Batey was ap-

pointed as his successor.

Scaling subsidies and a generally rising box office, gave the company a sense of self-confidence, and in the first year Batey produced eight major plays, including The Quare and the Rake, Rauharenz and Schauspieler are Dead, and The Miner's Boulder. An outside workshop was established and agreements were made to the company's administrative and technical staff.

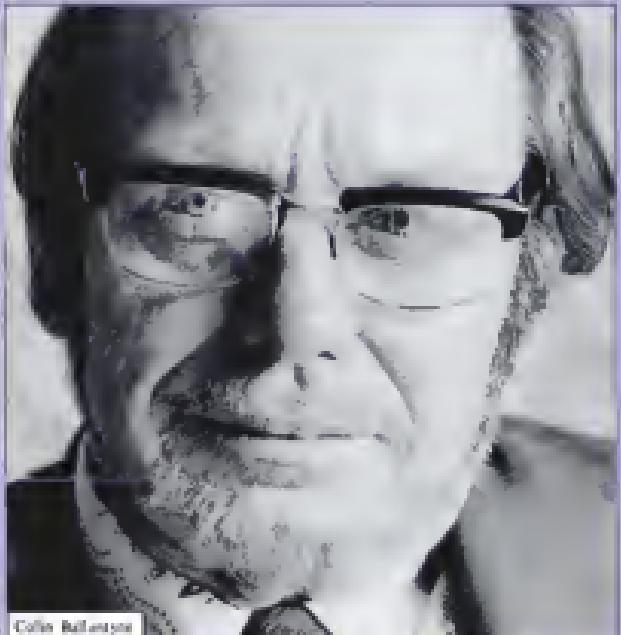
The year 1974 saw even more success, a total of 16 productions, with the company touring to the Festival of Perth, Canberra, South Australian country areas, and performing in informal city spaces. And this level of expansion continued in the first half of 1975. The Alchemist was presented for the seventh Adelaide Festival of Arts, and other productions in the repertoire included A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Pickwick of the Western Field and Radley. There was also another Canberra tour and two school seasons.

But radical changes were occurring in the city, at State Government level, and in Federal politics, that resulted in the company receiving subsidies worth \$140,000 that financial year. Further, the South Australian Government was by then committed to the construction of a drama theatre seating about 800 people for the Festival Centre, together with the passing of a legislative charter for the company. These were moves and decisions that meant, in effect, the overnight transformation of a small regional theatre company into a government cultural institution, with all the good or the bad that could mean.

It was a change in role and ownership that aroused surprisingly little opposition, except from Dr Jean Bonyffe of the Australian Council, who at the time argued that the status of a "Statutory" theatre company was perhaps placing government and theatre a little too close together for other's benefit. She was a voice trying in the wilderness, for the Dissident juggernaut to roll on.

But Joan Battarbee's words were heard in one important respect. Against the proposed that, in addition to the contracted workers in the company having able to elect one of their members to the board, the artistic director should also sit on the board, she vigorously argued that such a move was not only redundant but unstacking a administrative leaven. How, for instance, could the board determine his or her salary, or future, or performance of whatever?

A parliamentary select committee which investigated and re-worked the original Bill took none of that argument, so that the somewhat unusual result was adopted of a non-person board, those nominated by the government, two elected by the subscribers of the company and one by the contracted players and staff, most of whom were selected by the artistic director. But he did not have a seat. In short an orchestra conducted in which no voice could be better informed of fiscal policy than the artistic



Colin Ballantyne

1178

While these moves were under way, there was a committee formed among the company and their called for applications for the position of artistic director. This clause being meant to apply. It was at the time assumed that the committee based its little familiarity with Barry, who was, indeed, not present at the somewhat abrupt ending of what had been two years of hard work and vigorous promote. The committee formed argued that, with the new company structure and the generalists' ultimate responsibility, the senior position should be thrown open once again. Fair handling or not, the position was advertised, and George Optree, then with the Melbourne Theatre Company, got the job.

Ogilvie brought to the South Australian Tea Company all the qualities that had made him a star producer in Melbourne. Dedication, a pleasant temperament, a taste for style, passion and the large gesture, and a social connection that in the matter of forming a tobacco company of stability and impact, the most important ingredient was an almost personally identifiable individual working relationship with each company director.

It was the base upon which he had worked in Melbourne, with one major difference: in Melbourne the day-to-day and month-by-month management decisions of the MTC were made by John Stanton, whereas in Adelaide Ogilvie had to make them. It was no longer a matter of "Here's your production, play, cast, designer, set, and programme — go to it." The complex management problems associated with running a major (in Australian terms) theatre company — the necessity to plan ahead to make financial, to work out schedules and plot courses of action, to relate to office routine, financial planning, and all the mundane parts of theatre management — were worrying to him. And as a result conflicts began to occur between the administration of the company and the artistic director. Ogilvie tended then to withdraw, leaving an alongside his friends and colleagues, Rodney Fisher and Helmut Laksman. And, as a consequence, the company began to experience strains that eventually came close to breaking, to the intense frustration of all board members, artistic directorate, players, and technical department.

And yet despite this situation, and the inevitable loss of efficiency, George Ogden called out from the materials he had — those he inherited and those he acquired — a company that presented to an often surprised, occasionally astonished audience, productions of great style and resource of dramatic music and action.

But it was not — except in some adequate productions by Rodney Fisher — as intellectually realized-out, or dramatized approach to theatre arts. That was not Ogilvie's style. His intuitive and sometimes evocative approach to the plays he based often resulted in an enrichment

effort both on his and his cast's part were required to bring the production a sense of the possible.

Many productions appeared to be the result of a kind of straining of resources, and when the inevitable expansion of business was necessary the result was an increase of most embarrassing capacity for members of the company, especially of the artistic department, to become highly definitive and virtuously organization. All of which were signs of the coming under the surface those

But there was a honeymoon period in all this. Ogden was hired as director in November 1912, and between then and the company's move onto the Playhouse of the Adelphi Theatre complex, a nestled in an old suburban church and performed in a variety of theatres with varying success. Plays during this period included David Williamson's *Anglophile*, *There, Long Days*, *A Journey into Night*, *Abortion for Menace*, *A Civilised Marriage*, *Occupational*, *Alpha Beta*, *Smart Alec* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

For the 1974 Festival of Arts there were two productions, Louis Basan's *The Study of Gugel Platz* and a reprise of *The Comedy of Errors*, as well as a late-night show and children's performances. With Helene Lohmann as director of young actors, the company began its Thaumatoground programme and began touring schools. At times however, at others with a vigorous edge or bleakness, it began properly to be recognised as a theatrical force in its own right, not merely there, but with obvious talent and creative potential.

And it was now big business, as the big corporations in Australia prove.

In October 1978, the company moved into the multi-million-dollar Playhouse where every dream of a struggling producer in the 1960s and 1970s was realized in technical facilities and community support. The usual funding process told the story. The annual subsidy, combined State Government and Australia Council, went from \$140,000 for the 1972-3 financial year to \$200,000 in 1973-4, to \$480,000 in 1974-5, to \$496,000 in 1975-6. Current projections for 1976-7 indicate a total revenue, combined box-office and subsidy, of something in the order of \$750,000.

The opening season in the Playhouse in late 1974 saw three "show" productions, *The Four Carbolic*, *The Department*, and *The Show to Come*.

In 1975, the company's first full year in the new decade, brought in such plays as *An Fox Duke N. Esquire*, *Orkestra*, *Black Spoons*, and *When Roaring Tex* plays were produced in all, and the company toured throughout South Australia and played in Melbourne and Sydney.

For the 1976 festival, there were again two plays, *Coriolanus* and *The Winter's Tale*, and following them, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Othello* and *Measure for Measure* were announced.

— It was all entirely subjective, sometimes showing moments of real achievement, sometimes levels down in mediocrity, but overall a standard of achievement which some people consider regarded at the 10th best than in Australia we are not able to judge the assertion but I have always respected their judgment.

However, what should be said is that from the Adelphi theatre-goers' point of view, the main disappointment during the years of Ogden's direction were the increasing inability of the company to come to grips with, or relate to, the political and social environment in which it operated. It remained as it had under the successive directorships of Tasker, Dryman, and Bayes, a kind of cultured appendage to Adelphi, a luxury thing that was a bit unsafe in its manners and style. An expensive point in a theatrical Adelphi middle-class thing, a thing casting and supporting its own climbing and intruding cohorts of élite.

Hard words, perhaps, and they can be directed at most theatre companies in Australia. For amateur theatre and high-culture performances always run the risk of self-sabotage and social irrelevance, a risk that other major subsidised cultural institutions, such as art galleries, libraries, and even botanical gardens, have learned to live by without a second thought.

Such sentiments were not unknown to Georges Oigbin or his company, but despite a struggle to break through, and in a real sense, out into the community, they remained as if to stretch the atmosphere under his spell. Notwithstanding noble efforts to take a programme out to the masses or the country or run schools or workshops its impact was negligible. And despite occasional successes, most members of the company, including the directorate, knew this and displayed their knowledge by elaborate deference and a quiescence to anger. They had not yet succeeded.

And as such she before us, and several
triumphant growing, the directorate looks up.
Hilary Ballantyne resigned to study
contests. Rodney Fielder resigned to take
up freelance work. George Ogilvie's resig-
nation, which had been announced a year pre-
viously the 1976 Festival of Arts, ended in
late 1976. He stepped into play in a Christ-
mas show, and then he stepped down to play
for a time. And the company entered a new
phase in its development, with veteran
English producer-director, Colin George,
as artistic director. His director of theatre
in education is Roger Chapman, good
director is David Williamson, assistant to
the director are Ron Blair and Anna De-
battista, and the head of drama is Rodney
Field. It is an impressive team, but it is too
early to predict that they will escape the
fate of last independence and irrelevance.

But let us be enough to say that the advent of Colin George in late 1998 has changed the company and the mood of things generally, so much that whatever happens, things will never be the same again.

OUT



George Ogilvie

Kevon Kemp interviews George Ogilvie, retiring director of the SATC, and his successor, Colin George

The George Ogilvie retiring from his job as artistic director of the South Australian Theatre Company was the most relaxed Ogilvie I had met. During his closing production, playing a role in an Old King Cole show for the school holiday season, another scene closed in on Mr Ogilvie at all.

Fascination had been lifted from his idea a click, and he seemed cleaner and clearer than before. Always amiable, always with an opinion, plainly possessed of an intense outgoing love of theatre and its practitioners, George Ogilvie can centre the show, his audience reactions to an event that I can recall amongst stage people we know. Without his being at the jazz workshop, I have seen Ogilvie at a large gathering of critics, simply won't regret it having to disturb such eminent folks.

Ogilvie admits, directors have their critics and their axes quite beautifully choreographed, they move and set themselves in an expert use of antagonizing.

With Ogilvie it is different, only in conversation will he develop vibrations towards you — and then only if the conversation is working well.

Some time ago, when Ogilvie was beginning an interrupted flight around the leading Australian companies, I was at a dinner function and was coming under attack for my review of the play in an Old Tom production I championed as an art commercial masterpiece, not at all the sort of piece to be picked up by theatres which proclaimed serious aims. A woman reviewer pushed at Ogilvie: "Of course you'll be dropped in Adelaide, won't you?" Ogilvie: "Not at all. I don't think it is the sort of play we should be doing."

From memory, Anthony Steele and I cheered. I added the point that a newspaper editor I knew stayed for the second half of the play in Sydney only because he'd heard that the actress playing the girl had a great part of it. Certainly, it was the audience sort of reaction one expects from editor, but it was as a good comment on the play as I had come across. At least, it amazed Ogilvie and confirmed his view.

Subsequently, Ogilvie and his company did the play, and when I thought this up at the latest luncheon, it opened many George Ogilvie opinions. We had been discussing the influences imposed by the

theatre premises, and traditions, of theatre but I kept them to myself.

"I would never have done *Pygmalion* in our old home, but it was right for this place". ("This place" being the Playhouse of the Adelaide Festival Centre). "Everything here is so splendid, you're surrounded by all the desirable things — but after a time it becomes very clear that this house has its own needs. And they were different from our earlier life."

"With the Playhouse, I was very much aware that a lot of people were coming to the new theatre with expectations not at all like the audiences we had had at our rougher earlier stages. Suddenly, it was all right and proper that *Pygmalion* should be done — in this place and for this audience."

The Ogilvie policy, though "policy" is a hard word to use with George Ogilvie — his packing of ideals for theatre and its workers would be a better term — was to perfect a group of players and an organisation that would pack consciousness of live theatre into the surrounding community.

Retired in his profession because of his respect for his co-workers, Ogilvie achieved his last share of rewards for the South Australian Theatre Company. If he has a regret, it comes from the way the group he helped to become established moved its functions now past his aspiration.

"In our old grammar," Ogilvie says, "everything happened somewhere else. All our work was out, we would play in various venues, in many country towns. The workshops were well, we had a really very big and busy school and community section in our Theatre-Go-Round. We had a centre but people were mainly going out from there, there was a bustle of activity all outside the building."

"Now, we've always had the Playhouse literally over us, in a matter of months it became the big thing. We noticed that the things that used to happen outside our building in the earlier days became a little less important in the thinking and priorities of the company."

"The aboveplace, the Playhouse — that dominated. What were we doing there because for the most important day-to-day questions. And as we were saying, different audiences built up — with different expectations as to the sort of plays they would see."

"So, in all these a new time for us. I think it would all have shaken out quite well if I had continued here, companies are like that if you've done your training well then any sort of over-attention to a luxury theatre will settle down and the real world will go ahead again."

It was 1972 when George Ogilvie took over as artistic director of the SATC and after nearly five years has age 14 for a time of rest, some months or a year to fit his latitudes again. Use of Ogilvie's fortunate qualities is his professionalism, he can step from working with campus or amateur stage into the commercial theatre.

On some occasions with his own

very few in colour in which he 'had an closely involved. Ogilvie did, in my judgment, turn a traffic jam kindly towards his players, not driving them to a schedule tight enough to ensure that opening night would see all their explorations brought together. Yet as a major professional engagement everything was fast and taut and surely right on the night.

With complete amazement, Ogilvie recollects that I had said at a preview of so that "Mr Ogilvie's productions are always much better in the second week" — which statement one supposes, is some sort of a compliment, and crucial more of a system that does not always allow "second production runs".

Last year Ogilvie produced Mozart's *Il Serpente* for the Australian Opera. I suggested that it must have been the most demanding job he'd faced.

"I was petrified," Ogilvie took a little time to call together exactly the quality of the fear and in evocement that the opera had given him. "There they were, the great company, so completely professional, there at every hand, very formidable wherever one looked.

"One thing I knew — I had to measure up somewhere on the musical side, logically, I was trained as a musician and what I managed to establish some musical credentials it all relied on.

"Then I treated them exactly as I would a company of actors, we sat down and discussed the opera, its plan, Mozart's direction, his time and style. To my relief, everything went perfectly, in the end I think it gave me as much pleasure as anything I've ever done."

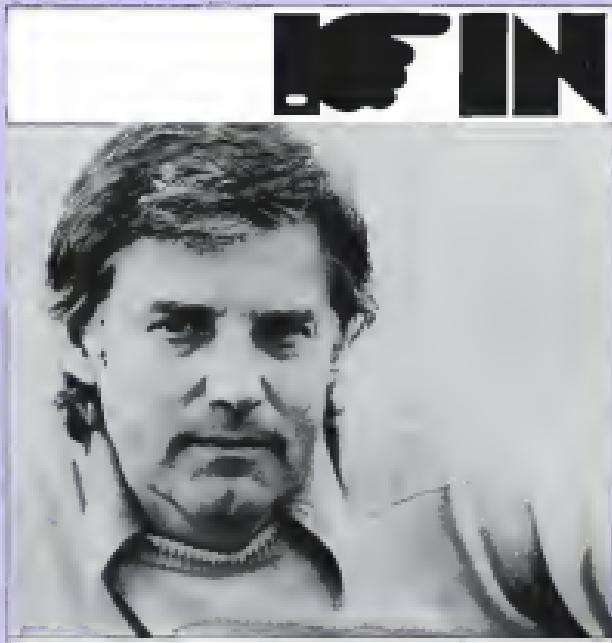
It must have given the Australian Opera some solid satisfaction as well. Ogilvie is invited back to produce another opera in the 1977 season. High probabilities of his more spectacular acts may not play the main role in the choice of George Ogilvie; it is easy to see that his large idealism is not shared. Nevertheless, as he has hoped will share him, in the hours and years, what right and particular way he will go.

Early in his career Ogilvie spent six or seven years in Europe, training in mime, studying movement, acting in famous mime groups, teaching, conducting workshops for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His teaching side is a strong element in his perspective, one way or another his directing has always had a light touch of the teacher.

Perhaps Ogilvie will be drawn back into a teacher's activity than the flick the corner of Adelaide's Playhouse and the wide landscape of the Festival Centre.

A simple man, he is also a style and a pleasure recipient of urban aggression. If, though, the talk is offhand, Ogilvie puts a few garden pots over in and a seat is found. He has none of the aggressiveness that often accompanies that other component of the theatre, Mr Ned Flanagan, yet the Ogilvie men are very much together.

What he leaves behind in Adelaide is a well-founded and confident company, a



Colin George

city less parochial than when he created, many pointers to the way theatre can represent in its whole substance.

The road to South Australia now passes of the blanching of many flowers, plus of the Department of Further Education for words of regional theatre centres and for help in small places. Although it doesn't show up in any bureaucrat's file, the George Ogilvie in Adelaide has done much for the new approach to theatre in the popular places.

It is right for Mr Ogilvie to move on, when you have had a moment that is what you do.



Mr Colin George, the new artistic director of the South Australian Theatre Company has come along with that remarkable set of qualities: professionalism of the soundest and highest type; spiritual ardour for theatre that seems, it seems, only from the European style.

Such professionals as this — and Mr George has been joined at the SATC by Mr Roger Chapman, another Englishman, as managing director — are effective to please themselves pretty tormented at this

country — sure that at last we can have a different show from the old cry that everything should be anywhere.

Twenty years ago, giving up my voluntary obfuscation, I argued for ungoing theatre talents. In that enthusiasm I even suggested that spirits such as Michel Saint-Denis should be invited, to give our beginning of funded theatre some notion of what the art was all about. Apart from the very few pictures of theatre, there were, I proposed, a number of younger British and American figures who seemed exactly what we needed.

Such talk was then utterly forlornable, we had to have the complete Australian job, even though the talents needed did not exist. Since then the picture has become better, but had we at that time bought in the men and women we needed from overseas, my belief is that our ranks of acceptable professionals in all departments of theatre would be immeasurably more impressive.

Colin George is, thus, a protagonist for a cause. He sings well for the role. Drawn in theatre for almost exactly the same period of time as his new company's entering director, George Ogilvie, Colin George is lean, tony, modest — a better A.P.L. he is not, won't be the leading of slacks in Australia, he leans, however, as he goes.

There is some discussion of critics. I like my visual slacks on the tape, that and

newer, peripatetic — and educate — are concerned in their total personalities that the arts are of some significance in society, and that artists are no oddities or mere malcontents than footloose or crackhorns or jockeys, then we will suffer the present unhappy state of creative art well," says George, "we'll undoubtedly get to know them."

Biography shows a short boy and a present life with the stage. Up at school in 1952-53 Colin George was founder of the Oxford and Cambridge Theatre which became the Elizabethan Theatre Company. Here he directed with John Robertson, Peter Barton, Peter Hall — campus friends who have stayed very dear to him as campus friends so often do.

From the beginning, three years of repertory acting, then into management, as Associate director and finally as the artistic director of the famous regional theatre Nottingham Playhouse, Sheffield Playhouse, the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield. In 1973 he came to Adelaide Australia as Head of Drama Department, University of New England.

With all this over his shoulder, the present situation under George is that he is, in fact, future free. His main acting director is from references to past events not alone always only to show how a drug may be dead, how an actor can be used.

About his Adelaide stay, obviously shorter than the university hoped, a might be, he has a little regret: "I think they feel used them a lot, but there it was — I did a lot of workshopping up there and got no audience alongside playwrights. Somewhere, the other part of the theater got into me again the Adelaide job came up the right houses were made in my direction. Finally, the university was very good and let me go early."

"Now, I am really aimed at getting back into this sort of scene again. In a suitable way. Adelaide lined me up for a — we're just enormously lucky to come into a centre such as this Adelaide Festival, and without a company that has worked so well with George for so long."

"I'm looking all the time at actors all over the country. I want to get the best here and perhaps one or two from Britain. Most of them will be able to have only short seasons, two or three plays but they'll match the permanent company — and the company will challenge them."

Getting on with boards of management is not a bogey for Colin George. "Tyrene Gohier said to me that the first job of an artistic director these days is to get on well with boards." The focused energy, the clear sense of direction, the unassimilable competence of Mr George indicate no board trouble.

A question on experience rebounded on me. I had to tell George where I thought the rebounded theories had been wrong in choice of plays. My thoughts no long-term attempt to show the main traditions of theater, too many lightweight plays that

were not in a form in the straight Elizabethan Theatre, not enough courage with the more experienced of diverse play-generies in treatment of some characters and preserving local plays.

With most of this George agreed. He is beginning his own new season with two new plays — *The School for Scandal*, *The Cherry Orchard* for both of which he has persuaded Miss Ruth Cracknell down from Sydney. With typical drive, he has also organised around his own writing show, for which his old playwrighting friends Michael Gove and Ron Blair will be writing material, as well as Miss Cracknell herself a lady who knows how to script for herself very well.

Judging from his English history, George will pay a deal of attention to contemporary plays, as he has himself in Adelaide means quite a lot to him, he sees that back of him he has the most sympathetic government attitude to performing arts in Australia. South Australian society may still be stiff with background of lock-horn men and would be aristocrats, but the new mood makes a man exciting artistic centre in the continent.

To bring all the pressure under control should not be difficult now for the SATEC, given the Colin George experience in that much tougher English scene.

As to the high community activities of the company, George has a happy position: "Running all the educational activities, I've got the enormous task of having Roger Chapman. Do you know him?" Once I had met Chapman's "Well of Europe" at theatre in education, he is just ... and a private comment indicated the status of Mr Chapman: "It means I absolutely adore about that whole section of the theatre's work here. It creates a better arrangement."

George feels that, on the whole, funding of theater here is more generous than in Britain. "You've got to work hard for your money there. You get good financial

assistance, but your theatre has to sell a massive number of seats on its own merits. I'm sure we can do a better job."

In the theatre obviously, it is likely that Adelaide audiences at the Playhouse may not last quite as long and conventional savings than before. George, like other stage world like to bring his actors more into audience contact. He has also proved clearly very co-operative about use of his own theatre by other arts, especially the extremely promising Australian Dance Theatre, now reborn so remarkably by English choreographer Jonathan Taylor (another British import). For George, the total arts scene is an important as the success of his own particular field.

To his company of actors, Colin George has already brought a new style of professionalism. And as actors take class every morning, so should actors, he thinks. We discussed what I felt to be a certain laziness amongst Australian stage players when it came to training (At the Old Tote in Sydney, director Bill Redmond arranged special classes with visiting drama teachers — then found them largely neglected by the company).

The attitude is not that of George: "You're quite correct. The classes, from Margot Fonteyn down, do a bit work every morning. With actors I like to do the same sort of thing — movement, voice, games in imagination, the lot. It's unusual. After a few early surprises, some of our actors and actresses will then begin to see what it is, and what it takes, to be a worthwhile conclusion of the theatre."

This year of 1977 looks to be the year for the South Australian Theatre Company. Ogilvie took the company through a revolution of altitude on into a superb permanent home. Colin George comes in with a new energy, knowing the things that can be done because he has already done them three times over. All that energy, all that forwardness — I cannot see it being diluted or diverted.



Ruth Cracknell, Kevin Milne, Brian Delaney, Michael Fuller, Ron Blair and Colin George rehearsing *The School for Scandal* for the SATEC.

RON BLAIR

worked as assistant director
on Colin George's first production
for the SATC, *The School for Scandal*.
Here he reports on the experience.

Australia's worst enemies are other Australians

A work that has two hundred years in
tough, said W. H. Auden. He was referring
to *The Merchant of Venice*, but the judgment
stands for Sheridan's masterpiece *The
School for Scandal*, which first opened in
May 1777 at Drury Lane and went on to
become the comedy-satire of the age.

It is a choice play for Colin George to
have chosen to open his first season as the
artistic director of the South Australian
Theatre Company. It is, in the first place, a
masterpiece of wit and artifice with a
broad appeal to audiences, regardless of
age or education. Mr George has played
the part of the rake Charles Surface on the
English stage and has also directed the
play once before when he was at the Crucible
Theatre in Sheffield, where he was the
artistic director for 12 years.

My own respect and admiration for the
play increased and deepened with the
years and yet, why is it that so many who
pose themselves off as knowing something
about the British affect a superior snoot
whenever *The School for Scandal* is mentioned?

I have seen it only twice in 20 years of
theatre-going, this being the second time.
On the previous occasion it was played in
Adelaide by the Olivier company in the
early 1950s. It seems to be a play too often
staged in the bracket than in the observa-
tions.

How unusual it is in the City of Adelaide
that audiences of groups where names
scream about foster and more strenuously
than usual and where, if there is a ready
audience to be entertained, there are also
some critics who pass off their parental
whining for sophisticated

Colin George's "moaning" of one
gentleman, who had used the work of an
amateur group to beat the SATC about
the ears even before the play had opened,
was deadly and bleak. But Mr George is a
Celt, and when slapped, will lay aside his
concentric locks and good manners to give
as good as he gets. "Australian" worst
enemies," he murmured, as he put down
the phrase, "are other Australians."

At the first rehearsal he talked about the
play and its relevance — that word which
has become the catchcry of those who
would rail on high against the stage.

Sheridan's society, he said, gave its
serious attention to gossip while it lost
America. If the language of the play seemed
artificial to our ears, it was nevertheless
true to its time. Here the director read a
passage from Boswell's journal of 1763,
the young squire where Boswell estab-
lished his special arrangements with
Lounsbury.

"Now sir, I have but one favour to ask
you. Whether you canst in regard to me
play don't use me ill, nor treat me coldly
nor inform me by letter or any other way
what is over."

"Very consider, don't talk of such a
thing. Indeed we cannot answer for our
affection. But you may depend on my
behaving with cordial and politeness."

The play was blocked in the days, with
the curtain call thrown in for good measure. "I've worked on a lot of shows,"
drawled the former production manager,
"but none was ever blocked in a week." This
kind of immediate success is the
strength of stage artifice in a direct
rival of Colin George's years in the

English repertory system. However, it did
not stop there. For the remaining five
weeks he worked with the cast, as he had
gathered from across the country,
altering and shaping some after some, day
after day. Behind all the giddy business was
a thorough awareness of the need to root
the action in the reality beneath the ex-
travag. As a result, British James's Sir Peter
Teazle becomes more than just a comic old
flesh-and-blood with a frisky young wife. His per-
sonal and a generous old fellow tormented
by fresh love was one of the production's
highlights.

Another unusual aspect of the production
was the concern in which the younger
actors seem to hold those with more ex-
perience — far from common in the
Australian theatre, when I remember the
delight when Ruth Crockett gave us the
developed her own exact same business
with the choristers boys and the major
gossips when she, at that notorious
ambulance-chaser Mrs Caudle, related
the misfortunes of others with adolescent
delight. It was a treat, too, to watch Ted
Morgan (a wonderful actor) develop his
Coffey.

The first preview audience came from
the Coco-Cola factory. What hope had we
to interest them in a tangled plot of
displots and disguise told in archaic
English? There were a few sniggers in the
first interval, but by act two we had them.
By opening night, the audience was swept
along by the play and the playing. Even the
Adelaide critics gave their bold
opinions.

A work that has two hundred years in
tough

PROJECT OFFICER — Theatre Board

Dance, Drama, Puppetry

The Council maintains a large-scale programme of financial support for the arts, and provides advice to a range of government departments and other bodies. The Council is seeking a Project Officer with sound administrative ability and wide experience in Theatre to undertake the management of projects which arise from the Theatre Board.

The successful applicant will be required to process applications for grants and to provide assistance to grant applicants as required. Other areas of responsibility will include monitoring of grants to ensure proper financial and artistic acquittal; the development of contacts with individuals and organisations working within Theatre in Australia and for the preparation of reports and submissions on policy issues to the Board. Academic qualifications and experience in Theatre or Arts administration are desirable.

The position will be located in North Sydney and some travel within Australia may be required. Successful applicants will be offered a commanding salary within the range \$12,780-\$13,650.

Applications giving full details of experience and qualifications should be forwarded to:

The Recruitment Officer

Australia Council

PO Box 3033

NORTH SYDNEY N.S.W. 2060

Closing date for applications: 6 May 1977

WEBBERS BOOKSELLERS

343 Little Collins Street, 1st Floor, Melbourne 3000.
67 2418 67 2559

DANCE BOOKS! DANCE BOOKS! DANCE BOOKS!

SHAKESPEARE,
Photographs by Leslie Scott
Text by Nicolas Bouroges
Collins \$28.50

This book records one of the most celebrated partnerships in the history of British Ballet. Original composition, describing the dancer's career through their own eyes (and in their own words) and also through those of the world that has watched them. Many photographic prints.

ART OF MAKING DANCES
by Dame Ninette
Grove Press \$5.90

Mary Humphrey's autobiography in art, a gathering together of her experiences in performance and a lucid and practical舞者 book on choreography.

A LIFE IN DANCE
by Rudolf Laban
Translated by Lisa Ullmann
MacDonald & Evans \$12.50

Laban tells of his experiences, thoughts and ideas, and relates them in his inner vision of dance.

A HISTORY OF BALLET AND DANCE
by Alexander Blau

Extremely illustrated. Ten full page portraits of very fine dancers, including a history of music, theatre and dance, and a chronological order of the most relevant events in the long history of dance.
Barrie & Jenkins \$12.50

DANCE IS A CONTACT SPORT
by Joseph H. Mazz

A season with the New York City Ballet — how the company works, from the corps de ballet to Balanchine and Robbins.
Saturday Review Press \$13.20

ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN JAZZ DANCE
by Gail Gordon
Oven Publishing \$17.00

The most powerful book to be printed on Jazz. Divided into 3 sections, Anthology, the Jazz Dancers, and the Jazz Class. Magnificently illustrated with drawings and photographs and photographs to show positions.

WRITE TO US FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF DANCE BOOKS

DON DUNSTAN, SPEAKING OUT

"The South Australian Theatre Company so far hasn't reached the world standard for which I had hoped"

It was a matter of chance, a quickly arranged interview fitted in at the first available opportunity. But the most astute image-maker could not have staged circumstances more reflective of the Dunstan style.

He had that morning driven to Adelaide from Whyalla, an economically troubled South Australian industrial city, after an overnight rest that continued governing and politicking.

Immediately afterwards he was going to the ABC's Colloquium studios for his latest poetry reading session. Mervin and A. D. Hope.

And, to complete the effect, we met in a restaurant in the heart of his electorate — between the city and the ABC — over a steak and a glass of wine for the interview and the attendant sides, of color for the interviewee.

It was robust, informal, a rapid tour of issues by a man in command of his subject and with a professional consciousness of his own audience.

Such revelations as there were were less than startling. But some of the Premier's judgments — for instance his endorsement of the work of State Opera compared with the South Australian Theatre Company — are bound to cause more than a ripple locally when published. I began by asking Mr Dunstan, who as Minister responsible for the arts, will this financial year fund over grants worth \$1.3 million, what role he sees the arts having in South Australia.

"I think they have a role both in the community function of holding a mirror up to life and also in providing a tremendous enjoyment of life for a relatively wealthy group of people," he said.

"It's inevitable in modern times that drama tends to be a bit of an elitist thing."

"With colour television readily available, people need to make more effort to go to the theatre. But that's inevitable with all the performing arts."

"I think that what is now happening in schools and community theatres generally shows a very considerable reversal of interest in the theatre."

"I think it is significant that, at the time television was introduced, a lot of people thought radio would die. It hasn't, but the



Leisure audience has become very much more male than it was.

"In the same way, I think the performing arts are not going to the poor. And the presence in South Australia of a theatre company of excellence will mean a great deal to community activity and to our general quality of life."

The Dunstan administration — ostensibly as power and active in the arts field since 1970 — has given considerable support and hard cash to the arts.

As well as backing the Adelaide Festival of Arts, precursor of the Townsville Festival Centre complex, big subsidies to drama, music and other groups, the government has established a special department for arts development.

I asked Mr Dunstan if he thought the community was giving a sufficient return on its investment.

Mr Dunstan: "I think it's getting a very good return. Already, without adequate development of our tourist infrastructure, we have the highest domestic tourist from tourism in Australia."

"There are two factors in that. One is the quality of life in Adelaide, with the arts being the life as a major part of it. The other is the wine industry. These two are major selling points for us."

"The fact that people can enjoy the arts here to the extent as possible is one of the reasons why so many people come here."

Through the efforts of the State Government, the South Australian Theatre Company has been provided with a glorious permanent home in the \$6.5 million Playhouse part of the Festival

Centre, a modern major substation and has been established by statute.

What did Mr Dunstan think of the company's performance and potential?

"Its performance so far has been uneven and it hasn't reached the world standard for which I had hoped. I think it comes from a professional beginning to a lesser standard of professional excellence than was achieved by State Opera which was, I think, a seriously amateur company to a rather better one in this time."

"But I believe it has enormous potential. It has some extremely good actors and it now has a director [Barbara] director [Barbara] Georgia of world fame."

"There is every opportunity for the SATC to become a significant company in world terms."

One of the constant themes in the ongoing discussion about Australian theatre generally is the relationship between the state-supported companies, commercial theatre and community theatre.

Was Mr Dunstan happy with the way community theatre was developing in South Australia?

"We've been endeavouring to help community theatre wherever we can. A great deal has been given in grants towards their operations, but they haven't always reached the standards we would like. either. It is not possible, by simple funding, to see that community theatre does reach all objectives standard."

"There have been some disappointments in this area. But we want to do more."

"I am not satisfied that the expenditure we are making on the theatre is adequately meeting the criteria of fine Adelaide."

I commented that the Dunstan Government's 1974 major move in the arts area had been to buy Her Majesty's Theatre from J. C. Williamson's for \$100,000.

"By far."

"In the first place we couldn't afford to have that theatre disappear from the scene in South Australia. There are a great many performances which, regrettably, monetarily, an audience of the size that can be provided by Her Majesty's. The Festival Centre was built assuming the continuation of a 1,200-seat theatre as Adelaide's theatre, but we would be faced with real problems about revenue for a range of events."

"It was necessary for the Festival of Arts. But there were other reasons why we could not let it go."

"We needed a permanent home for State Opera, which it will be. Also, by having this theatre, we could see to it that those companies which we fund get an opportunity to use a theatre of ours."

[Since the Government purchase Her Majesty's has been used by one community theatre, Cardiff, augmented by the local country rock band, Mount Lolly Rangers, to stage their own musical, *Job*.]

Such is a much broader question. Now, in the well-timed *Premier's* view, did South Australia's cultural performing arts education compare with what he had described?

"We are not yet of the standard of some European houses. But I think that, for instance, *State Opera* is up to most companies. Their production of *La Bohème* was better than some European productions I have seen.

"I don't think the SATC is yet at the standard of the Royal Shakespeare, say, but it's certainly up to that of a number of major English repertory companies."

"Generally speaking, I'd say that Adelphi is rapidly approaching the continuing standard that can be expected in a number of European centers such as Munich, which, with its neighboring city, is about the same size as Adelphi, but which has a tradition in the performing arts dating from the Middle Ages and which has a centre comparable in many ways with ours."

What does the future? How did Mr.

Directions for development in the arts, especially theory, over the next few years?

"I think we'll see water and waste energy throughout the State of the SATC and its various subdivisions, for greater efficiency in storage and disposal."

"Communications across the State are now being provided with facilities. It's not just the Federal Council in Addis Ababa, there will be centres in towns such as Remenber, Mount Quedessa, Wilyalla and Pen Far. I envisage that they will be greatly used by local people and by tourists as centres.

"I expect, too, a much greater level of cooperation between State companies than has so far happened."

"I think there will be a reversal of
truth and participation."

A personal note again How did the *obligato* *Dominion* level of the

"As a small boy in Murray Bridge I was taught archery. I suppose that's where my desire to fly began and I've been interested in aircraft ever since."

And its owners — player and players?

"I like mid-creatively in the theatre. The Royal Shakespeare Company's *Midsummer Night's Dream* — the Peter Brook production — was a terrible theatrical experience. I was quite enthralled by *Shane Rimmer's Dead* (by Alan Fawcett) when I first saw it in London. It had enormous impact on the audience — electrifying. It gets across a whole point of view in an extraordinary way."

"Also, and since he's here at the moment, I like quiet, good work in the theatre. I thought Richard Chamberlain's *Hamlet* was a damned sight better than the hammed performances of some of the critics like you."

Personal commitment aside, though, were there any words in the oral? For the present level of support in South Australia, the result of a response to the public demands of the government of not a favourable one.

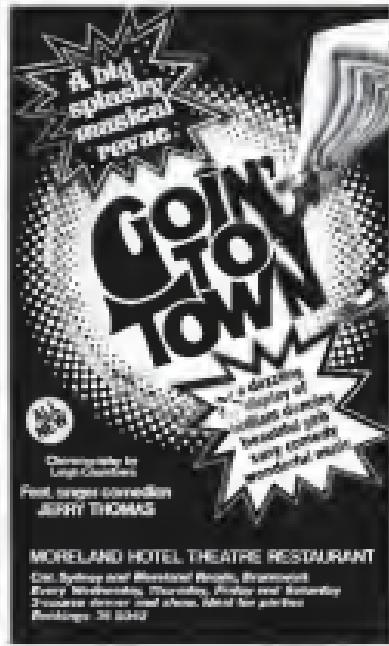
"It's remarkable that our surveys in South African people showed quite a high level of approval to the government for its achievements towards the arts. That is very rare and unusual in working-class areas."

Costs support continue their own
existing energy policy?

"I do believe so and I'm very proud of it. Before the [\\$17 million] Federal Center was opened there was a lot of criticism about our devoting money to it. That criticism has been entirely nullified and exceeded in all media of its benefit, I think."

"When I was last in London I went to the South Bank, and two writers from leading English newspapers who'd been in Australia came up saying they wanted to point out, since I was there, how different a place it was from our Federal Centre and that the difference was entirely in our focus.

"South Beach always gives people a sense of distance from ordinary life and activity. There is a gap to be bridged, whereas South



Many actors feel that when it comes to film they are the last consideration. It is director, lights, sound, music, the dolly, there's a dog barking, a plane going over, someone farted, the car's car again, and by talent, and finally, very finally, action. And they are not happy.

As a budding director who wants every actor to give their very best, it worries me that they are not often happy. Having nearly worked amidst the technical vagaries of the film set, I wanted to find out about that place where the actor is generally the happiest, the stage. More particularly, that nicely experienced luxury on the Australian Film set, the rehearsal period.

Gill Armstrong

“Now where were we up to, Sally?” (or how to be an actor's director)

Gill Armstrong is a film-maker. She was one of the film producers of the Australian Film and TV School. Her films include *The Royal Marsh Mower*, *Saints Night*, *Our Hundred-a-Day*

Get Off and *Smoker and Lollie*. *The Priest*, *The Voyager* and *The Doctor*, starring Ruth Cracknell, was winner of a 1976 Goya Award and is soon to be released commercially.

John Bell of the Narval Theatre not only manages to make critics and audiences consistently happy, he has also been given the highest accolade of all, that of being sometimes described as an actor/director, the supreme happy master of actors. He very kindly agreed to allow a young species from the film world to grace the rehearsal period of his production of David Williamson's play, *A Handful of Fives*.

I took the words home with the thought that perhaps a kindly master and Prince-of-Dreams' good looks might be the key to winning any actor's undying, contented happiness.

I read the play and wondered where we were all going to be banishing ourselves about for the next four weeks. The paper didn't seem to have much going for it. It all revolved around some rather uninteresting characters doing some inconsequential bitching. Not terribly compelling stuff. A journalist called Jill writes a bitchy article about a film director called Mark, who casts his actress-wife Sally, as he is looking laid in his latest film. All because Mark's best boy had set up Jill's brother, Professor Russell McAlister and his wife, Wendy, who were meant to be overseas but arrived home in time to be part of one of the reviews of an amateur production and something like, "David Williamson needs a few handfuls of friends."

THE NEXT MORNING Peter Carroll, Judith Parker, Peter Sarsgaard, Anna Volenca and Berna Marsh assemble with their lungs marked respectively. Russell, Wendy, Mark, Sally and Jill. I heard somebody mutter that they were terrified to be working with the wonderful John Bell and talented Peter Carroll. I couldn't help noticing that our director had cast his actress-wife as the leading lady. I wondered if that was why I thought every baby director I'd heard of before had been a keep-away from parents, children and most of all rehearsals and loved ones.

THE PLAY OPENS ON A LATE AFTERNOON IN AUTUMN RUSSELL AND WENDY'S HOUSE AND JILL'S FLAT AREBUT BY LATE AFTERNOON SUN.

The rehearsal room at the Flaxbushes Theatre in Kings Cross is lit by early morning sun.

RUSSELL STANDS IN THE LIVING-ROOM AREA UNPACKING BOOKS

John Bell sits on the other side of the skilled circle that represents that long-lost and endearing to represent the entire Narval institution.

THE RIDON IS IN SOME DISARRAY AS WENDY AND RUSSELL HAVE ONLY RECENTLY ARRIVED BACK FROM OVERSEAS

"How long have they been back?"

somebody胆 to ask. All at once they are all at it. They all seem to need to want to know about it.

Where's the breakdown? What sort of books are they? How long have they been married? What sort of sexual relationship do they have? Does he satisfy her? Is there a step-up here? What sort of things would they be unpacking?

What about the last broken glass of his last room? Would she show up for dinner? ... How do you think they treated an amnesia? What sort of character is it?

How old is this woman? When was the last time they met? Did they ever sleep together? Does he still have a drinking problem? Do they own the house or are they renting? ... Was it a miscarriage? How does she feel about the success?

The room resounds with querying actors. They all still seem relatively happy, happy to be doing the play, happy to be working with each other, but they keep looking into the gaps between the pointed words and questioning. The first sign of unhappiness perhaps? They look to their director, their happy answer-maker, for confirmation. **What's happening?** He is saying he doesn't know, he is turning the questions back to them. Somebody reveals a blithely sounding answer. Suddenly they are all inventing answers. They begin to relate the characters to themselves and to



people they once knew.

*My mother always thinks she captures when we go away... I have two friends who have drinking problems. Yet I do know this director just like that. You don't like an actress if she's terribly straightforward at first, but you wouldn't want her as your best friend. I know a producer who likes *funny women* and *more funnier women*. Why would someone offer their wife as their best friend? Do you know anybody who's done that? Does anybody know anyone who has affairs with men as well as women?*

Everybody is carrying themselves. The room begins to sound like a posh discotheque group without the green grass. One by one they slip reluctantly into their characters' slippers, sandals, cowboy boots and work shoes. The sounds like a turn into another *city*.

*Obviously part of the burden of broken down because we're short that childhood thing. I think it comes out of a sense of religious indoctrination. A kind of *Scopes* thing... My constant paranoid, and I?*

I don't think anything sometimes is broken is all that useful... Yet it is. I was always called a clown at school and it used to drive me... You're a clown, Bill... Deep down I think he knows his films aren't very good, either... Am I joking or serious here? Would I give you help? Would I give you a kiss? I don't know, nothing... Then they start hugging. Where?

There is a distressed pause. All look to the director for direction. Once again he guides them back into finding their own "Try again. See how it feels. Let it come naturally. Just try to remember what you're trying to say in this scene."

They begin to try out various modes of their own. The prevailing atmosphere of happy, compartmentalised involvement, I notice, is very productive. One character who likes a colouring, another on his side of the chalk line and gently pushes each to contribute towards defining the underlying relationships and attitudes behind each scene and line. Then the scenes and scenes are related back to intent.

"How would you feel under all these checks? I think that I'd just sit there. Don't worry about the exact moves yet. Addle a bit and see how you feel... Take a moment to think of everything that occurs to you before you sit them in."

SALLY, MARK WHAT A SURPRISE!
BILL, I KNOW IT'S A CLICHE BUT
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT
"No, don't sit there, that's the coffee
thing."

Slowly happy and, the gaps are filled in and each character is placed in living, breathing, drinking, epistolating, babbling, the somebody/something-knew-state where reality.

Our director, slowly rubbing his hands, often reassures us that there is no rush to find all the answers yet, that we are all pre-

pared in a growing process and that some of the longer truths will only come later in their own time. Everybody looks happily forward to that time.



By the end of the second week, the play is beginning to take some sort of clearly recognisable shape. Our director, I notice, now begins to start to mould that shape... "Hold it. Remember the sense of what he is thinking... But do you do the thinking or they? Do they make you feel good? What are you both doing in that little place? How do you feel? Who's dominating?... Think to yourself every time you say a line, 'How does that grab you?'"... Try counting five between each line... Use these silences... Try following her around as you talk... Let's remember the effect on the audience... Let's lead them along and then shock them... OK, let's try it again, keeping all these things in mind."



It is week three of my life as an observer. Scripts are down. Lines are set. Objects are





are still being refined and refined! Moves are still being created, discarded and occasionally even set. Everybody is still looking happy and I'm beginning to find the play is actually becoming more engrossing with each run.

I'M SHATTERED IS THAT WHY TEDDY (Bush, parish of Peter Carroll's wife, deceased but memory KENNEDY AVOIDED ME AT THAT FACULTY PARTY? YOU TOLD HIM I WAS A HISTORIAN?)

WHAT DID HE SAY TO YOU, WENDY? YOU DIDN'T GET AROUND TO TELLING US What's the Teddy Kennedy? ... Grosses. Oh Anna. Oh, and **THE TEDDY KENNEDY** ... Really? Oh I just thought it was any ordinary Teddy Kennedy. Now watch me say the line exactly the same. **WHAT DID HE SAY TO YOU, WENDY? YOU DIDN'T GET AROUND TO TELLING US** (He should have known, the Golden Rule, animals, children, relatives ...)

had the desire to indulge in between clouds.

No that's not a very clear situation to see. Have I got time to make her a cup of tea and now? Do you think we're drinking too much coffee? What else can we bring out? After-dinner mints, dogs? Can you give me a little vocal help?

Try just speaking off the same note.

The actors' enthusiasm is obviously waning. Peter Surman has bought a pair of cowboy boots. Boys has had her hair transformed into a journalist-like cut. Peter Carroll is becoming more and more hysterically inventive each day as RUSSELL becomes a frontier funny man. He has had his so far been made, underneath, around the side and standing upon the neck like a **RUSSELL McALLISTER BRINGS YOU THIS WEEK'S EPISODE OF HISTORY WHERE WE'RE UP TO SALLY!**

I think, what if I make her a semi-transparent shadow? like this ... or a watermark? We could both just our hands inside the chair.

Happiness is reaching climactic proportions as the key answers start magically to multiply around us, just as our characters predicted they would.

God, it's *self*, *self*, *self*, all the way through us isn't it? We can't see past ourselves. It's a negative influence, not an all-encompassing influence. We despise *herself*. She really can't eat ... She's a *fat* *fat* *fat*! We have all the way through the

play. **It's a series of bullet-like areas!** Oh we're just coping ... We're not coping at all. We'll never go out in the frontier and there'll be an *explosion* and he'll have to start grilling us the barbecue chickens.

The runs of each scene are now longer. Our director is beginning to reveal that he had a vision after all! He began to relate each scene to the other and to the play as a whole.

"It is a problem in the play that there are three quarrel scenes in a row. But we should try to make something out of it. We shouldn't reveal them in quoted scenes until at least half way. We mustn't anticipate it ... You must keep the energy level up."

There are two danger spots where the dragging. Let's get a feeling of the old reality. You're both conceding so much that there is no vitality. There should be a lot of space in this scene ... Keep it light.

Try hitting a real high at **OO OH CARVE ME UP!**"

"No, I think my high is a bit later on **YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS A SHIT!**" (Rehearses again.)



DIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT! Peter Carroll is dancing on one leg towards Anna, his hand waving in the air in time to the

Now they've got a house, everybody begins to hurriedly be discarding and introducing something that all stimulates with they





blowing music. What's happening? This isn't in the script. Still they all look especially happy. Peter and Anna tango cheek-to-cheek across the floor; their smiles marks

I have blundered a bit here into work fear and I can see everyone has been especially inventive in my absence.

The final work of referral! The frustration of being at ease and yet so far. Memory throws the floor time and time again. No one can hear the stage manager's mumbled cues. He desperately tries to follow the dialogue as it leaps up and down the page. "Ah, Peter, that's absolutely and absolutely not, absolutely and absolutely." David Williamson would be proud of their determination to get every word spoken as it written.

Step. Up over that line again. Now say it three times. Again. Try it again, Anna. Don't break it up. You just run the two lines together."

YOU MIGHT AS WELL GO ON
CARVE ME UP ... HERE RIGHT
ACROSS THE THROAT ... (Stage)
... YOU MIGHT AS WELL GO ON
CARVE ME UP HERE RIGHT
ACROSS THE THROAT (Stage)

"Please look at her tonight. I can't tell if it's working. It still too early."

Anna goes home with her director to repeat these lines across the dinner table. YOU MIGHT AS WELL GO ON
CARVE ME UP HERE RIGHT
ACROSS THE THROAT YOU
MIGHT AS WELL GO ON CARVE ME
UP HERE...

Only practice makes perfect. Only perfect makes for real happiness. Our director pushes the words that are peering timidly together. Boutiques are repeated unerringly. His "OK-one-more-time" persistence begins to work. Suddenly timing and pace are growing. Tension, passion and energy are building. And everyone is happy. "Yes, that's on the right level. It must come down there... Can you make sure all these can come very low as they have; I do time to protest?" That's good. And try to extend further with grace.

Hang on to that. Don't make it any harder or more bitter. Consider the way the two are words. You must give it a more immediate quality... OK, let's do

the dance routine one more time.

7

FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT! Peter and Anna, led by a stage choreographer are on the real stage, knocking their real knees together and doing real-looking leaps off the real furniture.

It is the first day on the set. Everyone bounces up and down on the real furniture, uses the real door handles and steps up and down the real steps. There is a lot of hammering, doorbell and phone effects, and belted men in army shorts are running around with hammers and police coffee pots.

It is a run fraught with physical problems. Chairs are moved on and moved about seem much larger and heavier, doors that really open and shut and steps that must be really stepped up get off the way. All the most vital markings of the just-practised running are broken. Chairs are lost, people reached and spacial relations impossible. Is the unyielding enthusiasm about to crack? Our director patiently directs everyone back to basic spatial thoughts and do-it-again, and the problems soon drift away and all remain happy and secure. Two hours go and Peter Carroll comes up with another way to be.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL McALLISTER BRINGING YOU THIS WEEK'S EPISODE OF HISTORY NOW WHERE WERE WE UP TO SALLY?



It is the first dress rehearsal. Everyone is looking very pretty in their new clothes, especially Sally.

Light, sound, coffee
SALLY! MARK! WHAT A SURPRISE.

The audience of five Nostalgia staff, a photographer, two middle Bell daughters in their summer negligees, and one row of

the public who have assembled in by making reference to me last week's production, chills.

"Now don't let's lose some of that key information. We've all got so used to it that we have forgotten the audience hasn't heard any of it before... and pause after those laugh lines or you'll be drowned out."

All in all, it isn't very well."

Anna hugs each daughter perched on either side of her on Russell McAllister's couch.

"John, John, they laughed!" Everyone laughs. (Maybe relatives can sometimes mark.) "Yes, I forgot it was funny." The director and his actress wife look very happy. Everyone looks happy.



The new eight A Nostalgia of Friends opens to a handful of everybody's friends, the public and the author.

I watch David Williamson's face in the crowd.

FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT! He looks slightly shocked. Peter Carroll does a spontaneous solo-loop. There is a burst of spontaneous applause. He greets Anna and they laugh with carrying pathos around the coffee table.

The mother gallows. He looks as if he is enjoying his play. I wonder if he is enjoying it more than when he last read it. I certainly was.

Four weeks of rehearsals, collaboration, deliciously happy rehearsal have managed to make the cast into a living, fast, energetic, powerful and essentially entertaining production. Or perhaps I'm just not very good at making plays and it was there at the time I made up and set it again. I've heard that Peter Carroll has invented yet another way of being PROFESSOR RUSSELL McALLISTER BRINGING YOU THIS WEEK'S EPISODE OF HISTORY NOW WHERE WERE WE UP TO SALLY?



**Sydney
Filmmakers
Co-operative
Ltd**

Telephone: (02) 31 3237

PILES FOR HIRE

We have over 700 short 16mm films for hire. Films on art, drama, the middle east, sexuality, prisons, immigration, music, women's issues and everything else you can think of including a vast collection of experimental films and a few features as well.

Send \$5.00 for our Filmmakers Catalogue of Independent Film and Supplement to:

Postal address:
P.O. Box 217,
Kings Cross, NSW 2011

**One-year
FILM & TV DIPLOMA
Course**



**School of Cinematography
278 Palmer St. East Sydney Phone 310468**



**RIVIERA CRUISING
COMPANY wagga**

SEASON TWO

the australian premiere

STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN

DIAMOND STUDS

APRIL 14-17 21-24

STAR TREK II

THE COMING OF STORK

APRIL 21-22 28-29

STAR TREK II

**MUCH ADO ABOUT
NOTHING**

APRIL 28-30 14-16

STAR TREK II

STAR TREK II

STAR TREK II

Limited Edition Only //

**Performing Arts
Year Book of
Australia 1976**

Please order now to ensure your copy.

**Showcase Publications Pty. Ltd.,
P.O. Box 161,
Sydney 2000.**

**Please supply me with copies @ \$20.00 per copy
of the Performing Arts Year Book of Australia 1976
which is to be published in May 1977.**

Name.....

Address.....

State..... Post Code.....

Graeme

Graeme Murphy, recently appointed artistic director of the Dance Company (NSW), who has taken the place of Jaap Flier, talks to William Shoubridge.



Murphy:

"All I can say is I'll try damn hard, watch my step and be prepared to heed warnings . . ."

Shankridge: Given, could we start with some background details — personal history?

Murphy: I started as a apprentice with Ken Chappell, director of the Tasmanian Ballet Company. While there I got a scholarship to the Australian Ballet School which I took up, and was there for one and a half years, then joined the company itself. I was with the AB for three years that first was. We did an American tour and I decided I wanted to see more. On tour you just can't

see enough of what's going on. So I went to New York on an Arts Council scholarship. I studied everywhere and saw lots of theatre.

Shankridge: Then came Peggy van Praagh's ballet workshop?

Murphy: Yes, that was 1979. It was an interesting year, works by Dore Ashton, Leigh Warren, John Neumeier. But then I felt I got rather stale, so I went to London, to the Royal Ballet, it made me miserable. It was exactly what I didn't want to be doing.

Shankridge: What did you want?

Murphy: Contemporary dance. Much to everybody's horror I left the Royal Ballet after six months. I mean, one doesn't leave the Royal Ballet — except in a wheelchair. Anyway, I then found a contemporary company that really did please me, the Pulse Ballet company. We were a mixture of all nationalities, and almost everything we did was by contemporary composers. I remember a whole Bora programme. Working in that company



Graeme Murphy:

made the whole thing about dance come to life?

Sheehridge Who did the choreography there?

Murphy Blacks himself was very much a modern choreographer, it was fascinating. I was with the company two and a half years — we became almost chameleons about what he was going to do next. And nothing was ever really stereotyped or stiff. The audience — [Blacks] visited mainly to youth, and we had an enormous contemporary audience across Europe — could never have realised all that variety was the work of one man.

Sheehridge Then back to Australia?

Murphy Yes. But before that was a rather frightening back-breaking escapade [with Jean] Vanier, who was on leave from the AB across Europe with a company called Ballet Caravan. We got to Manila — then very happy and good-humoured and returned to Australia. We were offered positions there with the AB, but I preferred to go out for a year. I'm glad I did, because I really got to know what was going on in Australia. In the Australian Ballet you get to know what's going on in the Australian Ballet.

Sheehridge So, you freelanced?

Murphy Yes. A struggle to make a success, but it was a very creative year working with a lot of regional companies, creating works. But it was financially sparse, so we reported the AB and enjoyed it for a year. Then, briefly, London — and a telegram about the NSW position — and here we are.

Sheehridge Before we talk about the present, what about your stay in New York?

Murphy New York is definitely the dance capital at the moment. They've developed most audiences which gives so much more room for experimentation. Here, if you try to be brave, you can win 15 people over, but you'll lose 15. Sorry.

Sheehridge Any choreographic influence from there?

Murphy The Joffrey company as a whole impressed me more than any particular choreographer, what struck me was the form of their programming, wide, balanced sort of repertoire. Actually, because I played in Australia, I wasn't influenced by any particular choreographer, I just didn't work with or even see enough choreographers here. At the Australian Ballet there was some Ashton, Balanchine, Bösl, but I don't think any of them influenced me.

Sheehridge You raised the perils of modernism?

Murphy Yes. In New York they've built up an audience that is adjusted to modern. On the other hand, in England, if you try something different, you find you can get an amazing audience; people there are so conditioned. But then again, because contemporary dance hasn't been seen as widely here in Australia, people don't have pre-conceived notions. I remember working at Queensland modern dance went especially well in country areas where there's no ballet tradition to get in the way.

Sheehridge Yes. A certain sense of adventure is often called for, isn't it? After all, in Sondheim and Prince were trying — about Australia's capacity to create modern — we really haven't got that European tradition here; we're far more eclectic.

Murphy Right. We don't have to adhere to anything from overseas. I don't think it would work if we did. We have to work in a direction that's probably our own. The presenters just aren't here to create another Nederlands Dans Theater.

Sheehridge So, your company?

Murphy Yes. Our dance repertoire isn't like it is, too. The releases in the company are enormous — Graham dances, "classical" dances, we're a very melting pot of everything. And we're producing something that's our own.

Sheehridge But does help, surely, now, and then to import a big name choreographer?

Murphy Ah yes. And not just from the public's point of view. We need repertoire. And there are so many fabulous repertoires overseas, we must bring them over — to broaden our outlook, to widen our vocabulary.

And you, there aren't enough opportunities for Australian choreographers to get their work performed. I do think that here, in the company, the new Workshop Theatre audience situation will work wonders. Yes, I know, as many choreographers here had workshops up to here. They've done dances. So it won't be just a workshop, there'll be the chance for them to be publicly performed.

And another thing. With our repertoire out of all this, we are ever ready to perform. And — this is another of my particularities — the ballets have to fit the venue. You don't have just a standard set for the Opera House, another for Hyde

Park and so on, you fit the venue. That way you can appeal to a wide audience, which is our principal aim this year. There's going to be an audience-building year.

Sheehridge Do you have hopes for internationality?

Murphy Of course we're ambitious to be much more of a national company. We have plans to tour but that's a complicating process. If it's Sydney first, I want Sydney to know that it's an excellent modern dance company of its own. And Sydney is sort of the workshop situation.

Sheehridge Yes, the studio thing is important. When Michael Cunningham left Graham's company, he could afford only small studio performances. His whole style of dance was evolved from those small performances.

Murphy Our season is so hopeful, so full of potential. It pleases me so much I hear a growing list there with the hammering and sawing. This is good dying ground. We're going to try to acquire a good cross-section, not just cater to our followers. And we can, because we don't have enormous overheads. We can make use of diversity.

Sheehridge That's obviously important to you — diversity, the wide repertoire. What other plans do you have in these terms?

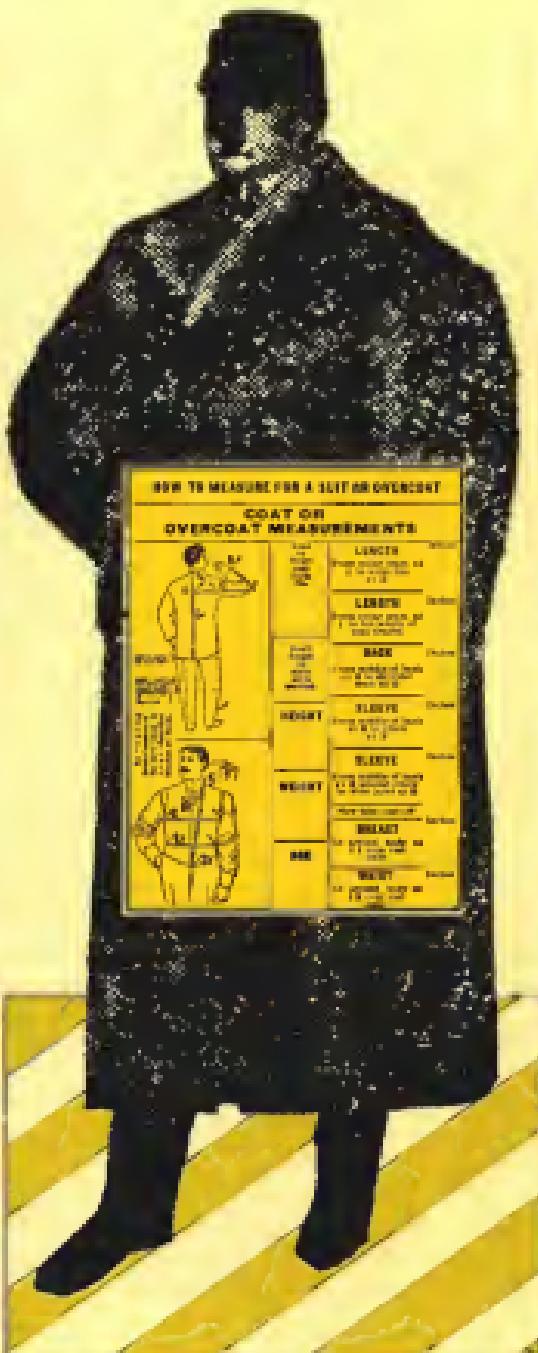
Murphy I want us to enrich our other territories: dance — theatre — drama. It's a great possibility and one that hasn't been tapped here, though a bit, by others overseas. We have interesting dancers here with strong personalities and we want to work with straight dancers here on Sydney's Potts Point fringe theatres.

And there are other things. Local companies have expressed great interest in writing works for us; we want to involve five more.

And there are other things. Local companies have expressed great interest in writing works for us; we want to involve five more.

Sheehridge To round off, being an artistic director?

Murphy Oh, I've enormous qualms. I've never been one before, than ever been an audience. All I can say is I'll try damn hard, with my nap, and be prepared to hear warnings from critics and outside the company. But, well, ultimately it's my responsibility. I hope I can do the company good and help towards as much development and progress as they've had in the past five years.



The Overcoat: an underview by Tim Robertson

Jack Hulbert has a unique gift, a high smart — like a karate chop, such that a cool always knows when the Dojo is in and well pleased. There is a harsh critical thrust to his foot, a sharp appreciation of the haywire and the set-on, more than a touch of shit and derision and a tendency to become snide. It matches the high comic style of his writing all the way from *Apes & Monkeys* to *The Overcoat*. The appeal of his language is that it pools the resources of the burlesque and the burlesque, applying to a fund of slang and invective an ear for decorative exclamation. What I enjoy is the urge for riotous verbal exuberance, preposterous combination and over-extravagance. Things can run amok. Early on, characters like Eps, Nostr, La Giorgonata, Kafka and Salomon were provided with a body of language that is somewhat unusable, theatrically — Johnsonian, bohemian and gleefully anal. As Hulbert himself notes, playwright, best doctor, and had more visitors about him, the cosy because more a quipster than the bold and孟子的 pugil the subject of the tribe while excusing family ills and One of Nature's Gentlemen is a great relief for actors with consciousness of any sort. It is arguably the best comic three-hander in Australian theatre, putting the ritual behaviour of pair-bonded power struggle in the framework of the stand-up sketch.

While Monk O'Neill battles with Plato-Frost, Mr Rakelton, not to mention Peter Lay and Chervy Grinmet, the march of a literary imagination is bound by the slowish business of performing everyday intrusions, notably eating and excoriating the past, talking to says and the dead. The off-mic companion to the early plays of Beckett in due, I think, to the importance of Monk's dying days as a series of turns, the actor whoels the scenes of time past with the props of the present and inevitably traps into the present again. The old poker's taste for opium, the high drama phase nearly past, his impotence and desolation, his wrote and excreted agent on statistics — maybe these as well. (Academics speculate that he is a bit like the Knapp of *One-Two-Three* Hill.) However, the challenge and meat in the language, related almost as food and drink, makes Monk's comedy and his poetry as if altogether his own. Imagination is fertile here, not merely unable to die. The central image in Monk's last will and testament is a man murieling and forking with his own matriarchal waste "a double but promising sapling" to replace the hairy and outlandish phallicities he cut down.

When Peter Cummins was rehearsing *The Overcoat*, one of his worries was that Kali was going to be a coarse sort of Monk. Perhaps it was the eating business, the man alone, cold comfort given circumstances, and the fucking he was doing

that got him down. Compared with the Troubadour of *Blisswood* and Hulbert's cabaret virtuosity on popular myth — Captain Moltar, Leo Davy, and a Toss to Werka — the theatrical experience is dark and hermetic. As characters, Monk and Kali are essentially different. Kali is a virgin victim, tormented by basic needs and the misanthropy of the world. Monk is his own misanthropist and while he is tormented by his past and mortality, recognises the master of circumstances of his last days. Kali is cleaned out by his landlord. Monk has been shot, or thinks he has. Kali has only known death. Monk is accompanied, but for Kali the only escort is after death and that takes the form of a practical joke.

Monk is integral to every Hulbert play. In *The Overcoat* it is different, and a heavy weight of the writing is thrown into a cycle of eight scenes, the burden of which is that this is the worst of all possible worlds. *The world does not quite exist in such scenes behind the wreath of cancer and coal*. *Shows a comment of death*. While specters coexist with plants.

Marius Fiord's quirky, elegiac score for the stage and band fighters the shades of Kali's agony and makes a concert valid view of it possible. One reaction is that the

grotesque of this play is too contemptuous Satyricos, unless even, I believe it has its well-found roots in Hulbert's former records among the old, reform and alcoholics and other inheritors of the bitter pill of German theatre — cabaret expositions, *Wunderland*, *Revol*. Most interestingly it connects with the fancy-free grotesqueness of Gogol.

Nikolai Gogol died rapidly by medical practice in 1842, something with seven lancers seeking his Ring, another one. A nightmare death that should happen only in a farce of the anti-entertainer comic comes to control himself, particularly in his short novels *The Nose*, *The Diary of a Madman* and *The Overcoat*. The reason his work has been so appreciated in some times is his reason, both comic and painful, of a great and chaotic world. People take leave of their names, names take leave of their people and events, like hyacinths, while through the night. The text of Gogol's comedy is of things and odds and ends that don't fit. They don't or won't systematise, of absurd systems that don't work, and the weighted of the earth that the *Alka* he is not under copyright.

He play *The Government Inspector* has undergone many famous modern evaluations from Neapolitan on. Managers probably don't know he wrote *Tore* and *Bebe* before Oscar Wilde was a twinkle. *The Diary of a Madman* has been a vehicle for brilliant one man shows for years — Jonathan Harris through Peter O'Toole to Noel Willman.

So in that case when the external tea is pushed or frozen off, J. Hulbert goes into the opportunity shop of literature and comes out with Gogol's *Overcoat*. The man is not an idiot. There is something about the 1940s broadway. Despairingly, he has acknowledged that "we all of us come out from under Gogol's overcoat".

There have been other refills — Paddy Chayevsky ditched it with Jewish subplots in *The Doctor's Dilemma* and Mankiewicz made the movie. Another, better, Russian version dates from the thirties with the dregs of the Tsar's labourer satirically mocked. Hulbert's taste for the bizarre and mortified character, language and circumstance matches the original material more aptly. In his own words, "One of his constant dramatical quirks has been his juxtaposition of hardship and humour, the real and the absurd — not to ridicule the system but attempting to give a mid-gift to the cold shell of his discontent" — the qualities of resilience, cold hunger and death.

Gogol called St Petersburg "the graveyard of dreams" and this is the location of *The Overcoat*. The action is not stuck in historical time and place. Kali's agency is geographical in a city that corresponds to Kafka's barbarous bureaucracy, with Chaplin's *Skid Row*, with the Metropolis of Impersonation and the Suburb of the Absurd.



Peter Cummins as Kali in the APG production directed by Tim Robertson

The Overcoat: Underview 2 by Malcolm Robertson

"There is a poetic and lyric quality to every theatrical. I feel that is all too subtle for the public. It will take time for it to understand all the shading. Also, how many stupidities we will have to hear about that play! Nevertheless, it will have a tremendous success because as a play it holds you. It is a completely a whole that one cannot delete a single word from it... it may be that I am prejudiced, yet I cannot find any defect in this play." Constantine Stanislavski wrote these words to Anton Chekhov after first reading *The Overcoat* in October 1903. These thoughts by the famous actor-director struck me, when I read them last week in the newly opened, handsomely performing articulation of the Victorian State Library, as being particularly pertinent to the first production of Jack Hibberd's adaption of Nikolai Gogol's short story, *The Overcoat*, presented by the Australian Partnership Group at the Prism Factory in September 1993.

Because of my own theatre commitments, I was not able to see Jack Hibberd's *The Overcoat* and the last week of its season. Clearly, I was told before the beginning of the performance that the response to the play, both by the Melbourne critics and the public, had been poor. I could detect that infelicitous or misplaced shade and register in the atmosphere of the Prism Factory on that night. The audience for the performance was indeed small. I felt an initial embarrassment for the five members of the orchestra as they surveyed their kiosks of corporals while tuning their instruments before the performance. As always, on those depressing occasions, my heart went out to the actors, who were already preparing on one of the back rooms. How were they feeling under these circumstances? What angles would they pursue in their performances to compensate for the paucity of response from that minute audience?

The first scene was played, the first song sung, and my sense of embarrassment, or more accurately, pity, I had been feeling for the plight of the actors, playwright reviewers and reader was forgotten. What I witnessed that night at the Prism Factory was an experience in the theatre that was rare and wonderful. Who had said *The Overcoat was unsuccessful?* Who had mentioned the word "failure"?

For the first time since the production of Gogol's *The Government Inspector*, directed by George Ogilvie at the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1971, a genuine effort was being made to broaden the experience of our actors and open up to them a European experience of theatre. Ironically, Mr Ogilvie's production, in its attempt to dislodge the audience and plunge them headlong into the squalid world of Gogol, had also been greeted with critical abuse.¹

¹ Also, how many stupidities we will



Evelyn Krapf as the Tailor's Wife

have to hear about the play?"

What made the about of *The Overcoat* at the Prism Factory all the more remarkable, was that it was being done in a fusion of the ruggedly individualistic style of playwriting and acting. Here was the playwright of *House with Four Rooms* and *Dead Souls* gamely and successfully employing a European approach to Indian play that while acknowledging its European lineage, was not merely an adaptation but a piece of writing that stands as distinctive literature at its own right. *The Overcoat* is finely disciplined playwriting. By the word, "discipline", I do not mean the playwright has been subverted by the dramatic unities. The discipline Jack Hibberd has adopted in *The Overcoat* is a respect for the original short story by



Jack Hibberd

Gogol. This discipline has, in turn, allowed the playwright ultimate freedom. *The Overcoat* is the most successful and challenging piece of theatre Jack Hibberd has written since *4 Stretches of the Assassination*. It may be that I am prejudiced yet I cannot help thinking that Jack Hibberd's *The Overcoat* and what the play contributes to our deepening Australian experience will in time equal the contribution Benito Brook's *Discrepancy* (1986) has made to the European theatre over the last few decades. *With The Overcoat*, an indigenous playwright has for the first time shown all the shakiness of our Anglo-Saxon background and attitudes towards the theatre.

It would be impudent to suggest that all went well with the production of *The Overcoat* at the Prism Factory. There were lapses in style by some of the actors that inevitably blunted the vision of the playwright. Impatience and the danger of rationalisation, related the play of the important juxtapositions of "honesty and honour, the real and the absurd" that is inherent in Gogol and dramatically important to Hibberd. The castle-like setting by Sven Perner had the effect of dwarfing the audience as it surrounded all the rafters of the Prism Factory. The "syrup" platform provided for the actors in the setting failed to carry the claustrophobic essential for them to eke out their wretched existence. The audience at no time felt like the puppetmaster manipulating and being manipulated by those tangible events and their realisation.

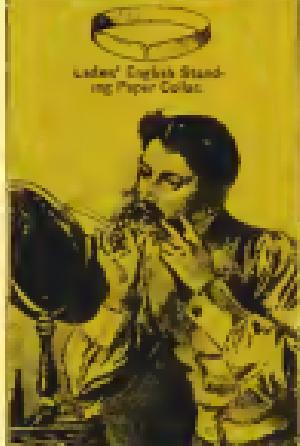
It was in the heartily abhorred music by Martin Frejd that the production substantially reigned the category of Gogol and the vision of Hibberd. Jim Frejd, as the singer-commentator, caught with soaring voices the right mood of dashed away. All the positive aspects of the production came beautifully together in the distilled sense of the play's protagonist, Kots. Here the director, Tim Robertson, the actors, Peter Cummins and Evelyn Krapf, and Jim Frejd brought the play both challenging and emotionally to life.

At this stage, it would be a negative exercise to list the possible reasons for the relatively critical reaction to *The Overcoat* to the production of *The Overcoat*. Suffice it to say, that if a play of this quality can be derided by the majority of critics in Melbourne their reputations must stand as an indictment of their expertise.

The belief that can be applied to counter the initial reaction of *The Overcoat* is the same belief that has been applied to the playwright throughout history of drama the belief Stanislavski so aptly proposed for Chekhov, when he wrote, "It will take time for it [the audience] to understand all the shading... Nevertheless, it will have a tremendous success."

I am certain Jack Hibberd's *The Overcoat* will be an integral part of our dramatic literature for a long time.

THE OVERCOAT



An adaptation from Gogol
by Jack Hibberd

CHARACTERS

KARL
A CLERK
DEPARTMENTAL HEAD
TAILOR
TAILOR'S WIFE
THE MAN
A POLICEMAN
THE IMPORTANT PERSON
A CLERK
LANDLADY
GOGOL

NOTES

- 1 The play requires a small ensemble of musicians and two color-singers, one female, one male.
- 2 The play requires at a minimum five actors, four male, one female.
- 3 Projections are suggested for titles of songs and scene declaimations. They can, however, be announced as an integral Brechtian element should projections be felt to interfere with the design.
- 4 Karl should be pronounced to rhyme with Karl, or Karl, not mark or mark.
- 5 Notify the actor and director interested in a depiction of Gogol's Melukhov's adaptation back on the author.
- 6 I have included a description of the Tailor's Wife. She should, however, be strong, earthy, tough, shrewd, and in no way the conventional beauty.
- 7 The adaptation is necessarily free, a thespian double entendre and half-joke from the springboard of Gogol's master prose. — Jack Hibberd



HOME

Karl sits at a desk. A small radiator stands on the wall above, keeping him close beside it, warming himself. He wears long underwear and socks, each with the big toe protruding through. He is picky, ugly, and, moreover, with thick, shaggy glasses and a shard of chipped glass in the extreme cold.

A faint light comes up on an otherwise darkened ensemble suspended in a black atmosphere. He looks at below.

He writes a short, and short at. He writes, stops, rewrites, and puts them on. He goes across to the opposite room at it for a moment, then puts on the boots. He stamps his feet.

He removes the coat from its hanger, holds it up in the light, disappears, then does it. His gloves make his hands then are shown in pockets.

Surprise

He extracts a thin sheet of paper from one pocket, and an old, printed envelope from the other. He stuffs the envelope.

Delighted

He walks to the radiator, sits, and sits roundly, proudly.

After a while, finds his balance

SONG OF OUR CITY

In our city the wind never ceases,
From every cold quarter it howls,
In a strong gale and tempest,
It lashes both men and ghosts.
In our city the sun never sparkles,
Both winter and summer it rains,
It strips the leaf of trees,
On footprints it grey and stains.
In our city the rain never ceases,
But mollies both ramshorn and shell,
With mudhole and discolor,
To hearts of a fated crew.

In our city the implements buckle,
Their laughter fills both town and park,
As women grizzly pack.
More about in the dark.

OFFICE

Karl sits at the desk. He wears the uniform coat of a minor clerk. His avaricious hands scratch. He peers miserably and suspiciously about. He turns at his hands, will rub said said hands when surprised and places his fingers in preparation for the day's labor. He takes a pen, turns at it thoughtfully, then pretends writing on an

imaginary sheet of paper until he is satisfied that his fingers are supple. He coughs. He turns at the in-tray, where lies a single letter. He takes it reluctantly, opens and turns at. He scratches it. *Pause.*

Karl. Please!

Please. He spreads the letter cautiously and reluctantly on his desk, takes the pen and a clean sheet of paper, prepares to write, then has second thoughts. *Please.* A thought.

Please. He leaves himself for the next, a sense of worry. He copies the letter, slowly and painstakingly reading some of it out

— with reference to Departmental Order No. XYZ123457....

Please

(Frightened) XYZ12345...
I scratch my head, and he is suddenly obscured.

Karl (as he writes, fidgety). There has obviously been a clerical blunder. (Please again.) Hear on end? Not by me. His fear and panic are now down. (As he writes, building up indignation again.) The order number should clearly read XYZ123458?

Please

(Frantic) I know it! The act of a quarter-wit.

Please

(As he writes, emphatically and proudly) Would you please read this foolish answer?

He takes his hands out. Blobs on the ink sit on end, plus the two sheets together, and places them in the out-tray. He looks back, fidgeted. *Please.*

He suddenly peers sharply into the inkwell, then removes a large blob of ink from a drawer in his desk, and sop up the well. He looks suspiciously around, has a quick rip from one of the bottles on shelves, then replaces it. *Please.*

He smiles, then turns blankly about. He examines the in-tray closely, sits back and thinks.

Deep thoughts

He takes off his glasses and covers them with a dark handkerchief. After doing so, a Clerk comes, places another letter in the tray, and leaves taking the letter from the in-tray with him.

Karl fidgets, cleaning his glasses, puts them on, and studies the in-tray again. *Please.* *Aha!*

He takes the letter, reads the recipient.

(As he writes.) — With reference to the aforementioned order, there seems to have been a clerical blunder. The order was filled fifty years ago by the then Under-Secretary (long, now Superintendent) Bong, in charge of census, demographics, I mean rocks, and ink.

Karl scratches, horrified. He hurriedly puts his copy to the original and puts them in the in-tray. *Please.*

He puts return to the in-tray. He looks pasted, picks them up, scratches his head, then suddenly realises, and drops them into the out-tray. He scratches a deep sigh of relief. *Please.*

He turns about, blank and depressed.

LUNCH

Kak goes to her coat and removes a parcel wrapped in was-paper. He takes it to the desk, looks around suspiciously, then opens it, revealing a small round pie, three green peas, and a coffee stick. He removes a plate, knife and fork from a drawer, puts the food on the plate, arranges his napkin carefully, then starts to eat.

SONG OF THE FUTURE

— can make peace

The future is full of difficulties and traps,
Of ambiguities in the sun,
Where the evenings smell of cinnamon
And yesterday's sunsets year longer

The future is full of upturns and downs,
Of turns each day in the year,
Where young loves turn to roses in a dream,
And when it rains it rains real bear

The future is full of mystery and wet,
Of apparently rain always,
Where the elderly are known and fit
And death is just a little lesson.

Kak sits along the song. He holds up. He takes his mouth with the handkerchief, releases *Golden Peas*.

The Clerk sniffs, removes the papers from the out-tray, goes across to the easel, picks it, and shakes his head in despair. Kak slowly turns round and looks at him again. *Pause*

Clock: *Musor*

Kak turns back mortified. The Clerk stands for a moment and ruffles the ruffled air.

Somewhat breathless again:

Kak: I always open my lunch in the corner.

Clock: I suggest you open your window. Kak looks abashedly embarrassed. The Clerk leaves. *Pause*. Kak miffs.

Kak: I can't wait a thing. I shall repeat that young churl to the Departmental Head.

The same clock enters but now as the Departmental Head and arrives in a regalistic costume a large hat.

D. Head: Kak?

Kak: *Applause*! Sir!

D. Head: You've been with us, pretty young man? *Corsair*?

Kak: Correct. Your Excellency. Though it only seems like yesterday.

D. Head: I believe you deserve a chance.

Kak: *Applause*.

(Handing *him a letter*) Take this and exchange it from the third-person singular to the third-person plural.

Kak: *Applause* takes the letter. The Departmental Head leaves. Kak reads the letter carefully, takes paper and pen.

Kak: (reads aloud) With reference to Departmental Bureau. (Pause) I would (Pause) Unprofessionally.

Confused, he copies for a while.

(Stops and reads aloud) — number

508 (D. H.) I am of the opinion, I submit,

that I was not in error but that an undelivered letter, I mean, I mean, sorry, D. H. general. He reads the letter again, and turns back suspiciously, then stops.

Third-person plural?

He counts on his fingers. *Pause*

(In profound anguish) I used to know all the numbers and persons. Latin was my forte.

He trembles and applies himself desperately.

Kak (writing and reading aloud) They are of the opinion, they submit, that they was in error and that

He copies the next section. *Pause*

I can't do it.

Pause. He breaks down into sobs. *Pause*. The Departmental Head enters.

D. Head: Fainted?

Kak, shaking his head. The Departmental Head reaches up Kak's collar and trembles or perforatedly, stands down through an abrupt hand-lift or whatever. You have just touched the promotional opportunity of a lifetime.

Kak (writing) I am content with myself just copying, sir.

D. Head: You could do with a new coat.

Kak (short and indignant) No. Your Excellency. It won't be a few repairs.

D. Head: Stop regarding your history on wages and high food.

Kak (as if he'd never heard of these) Women?

D. Head: Obviously the coat of a philanderer.

Kak: Please, sir, don't dapple me with names.

D. Head: I would not suppose my grace with it.

Kak: Such language, sir.

D. Head (holding up to the light) That's not a smutty's a plain word.

Kak: I'll have a standard next week.

The Departmental Head removes up the piece of paper he holds and signs it on to the desk.

D. Head: Get back to work.

Kak scurries back to his desk. The Departmental Head leaves. Kak picks up the half of paper and places it in the out-tray. He turns about, stunned and lugubrious. *Pause*.

Kak: Women?

THE TAILOR'S SONG OF THE TAILOR'S WIFE

— ever-earlier debonairness

My husband is a ruled sat
Who grooms right, and day
Like a new-born baby in a cot
I work my elbow to the bone
Cleaning up his coat and muck,
It's a wonder it's not a crime
He hardly does a scratch
And when I clean up clean
He quills me, you quill me, a bitch
A lady of course can never shout,
So when in tales of love,
I give the mongrel a cheer
I often dream of other men,
Or simply flying away
Told me, indeed, again

How do I change into an elation from a bust?

Tailor (in bed) Stop squirming!

Wife (profoundly) Oh, he's awake. So soon. At five in the afternoon. It must have been my heartache of love, so impossible to the Congress of the world. Or could it have been the perfume emanating from last week's galloping? The question was to a man's heart, as you have stomach. Good evening my little mortal!

The Tailor sits up. He sports a patch over one eye, the other is severely crooked. He is abysmally lugubrious.

I take you with spiced and aromatic. Come here, lovebird.

Wife: At once. Note how I float symbiotically towards him.
She does something intensely. He runs his hand to his left under eye on his.

Tailor (shaken) with a motion of dismayed

Parlour.
She suddenly changes her one across the side of the head. He looks on the floor, gets up firmly, raises his fist in defiance and takes it to his eye in his left-gauge. She walks up and takes his by the chin, then drags him with a blow from the other hand. He then sits on the floor.

Tailor: *Thud*

Wife: Stand up like a man.

Tailor: I can't.

Wife: Do you want the bugle treatment?

Tailor (sitting up) No. Anything but that.

(Pause) I'd think, perhaps?

She stands over him, showing her short overhanded.

Wife: You asked for this.

Tailor: Ahhh, big the Urals in spring.

She goes suddenly. *Pause* and

Wife: Better about a cold sponge.

Pause. We come to no eye rolled back into his skull.

Now getting three and work
We stagger across to the table, clatters

up plates and supervising
He's been working on that not for three

years and a half way up one leg.

Tailor: He's still there.

Wife: I haven't the heart to tell him he's dead. (Short pause) He's dead.

Tailor: Who?

Wife: Your customer.

He suddenly shoves aside table and chair.

Tailor: He was such a nice man.

Wife: At least we got the deposit.

Tailor: I shall send the family the fruit of my labours.

Wife: A kind of legacy?

Tailor: I always knew he had one foot in the grave.

Wife: Give me that.

Tailor: No.

They fight over the amputee leg. Tailor carries with his coat.

Tailor (breathily) Excuse me.

Tailor and Wife: A customer?

Wife (to Tailor) Shut up.

Tailor (breathily) Sorry.

Tailor: He looks healthy enough.

Wife: Would you like a drink, tail-head?

Tailor (profoundly) Sorry?

Tailor (sighs) D — I ought dash off

sharp.

With (genuinely at the dinner) *Creme de Cacao*
Kak (after to the uninvited guest) *How nice!*
Tolka (blown after his wife) *Makes it flow!*
Kak It must be heaven to have a wife
Tolka She is a jewel in the belt of mankind
Kak I can see who wants the treasure
Tolka I take no alms—
Tolka (softly) But? You understand?

Wife (softly with two sheets) Here we are
Chocolate with a dash of tango
They drink. *The Tolka crowd at his wife* (Elegantly) Be so nice!
Kak Delicious

Tolka Ah, there is so much work. Orders, orders, orders. They never stop. See this tray, for example. It's my breakfast for the morning.

Kak *Wishes*
Wife (picks)—referring to the example
Elegantly
Tolka (gratifying) *Wishes*, summer, autumn, spring. I am fit to the bone
Wife He has had to pay his prices up
Kak (unconsciously) I've done my duty now

Wife Well, what can we do for you?

Kak This—

Tolka *Cost*?

Kak What would you ask to report it?
The Tolka takes a handful, holds it to the eye and sniffs the root from a dinner napkin. *A moment of silence*

Tolka (holding his hand) Therefore...
Kak (laughs) Threadbare?

Tolka A cook for the people

Wife Would you like another liqueur?

Tolka You could always eat it as a cake

Wife Oh a noosing

Tolka Not your wife

Kak But I have no wife

Tolka A man of the world, eh?

Wife I know it. One of those others

bad-tempered types

Tolka Look at his eyes.

Wife (and) Loud and raucous

Tolka (unconsciously) Formulator?

Pause

Kak All I want is a few patches on my coat

Tolka Out of the question

Wife If I draw an analogy, Sir Tolka, you can't weatherboard a house that has no frame

Tolka She has a way with language.

Wife Yes, in different circumstances I could have been a dirty thuglet, a poet perhaps, or a tragic artist. Having you's looks into the atmosphere

Pause

Kak (at the end of her tether) What do I do now?

Tolka Order a new coat

Kak I couldn't

Tolka You're a disgrace to the civil service.

Wife *Markand*

Kak (grovily) How much?

Tolka (pondering prices) Well, with a cheap but precious material and a color composed of dog's fur instead of

strawberries, nothing costs them a hundred.

With Nothing less either

Kak (softly) A hundred?

They and Kak always eat a chair. *Pause*

Tolka The hundred's having second thoughts.

Wife I suppose we could part it down to ninety-nine

Tolka Of course we'd have to sit on the bottom a little

Wife (leaning over Kak) It would still do up

Tolka All the young blades come to me for that age

Wife Why, only the other day the Sultan of Monambique called in with his harem of men — a hundred lot. I caught cold — and demanded some quick replies

Tolka I should've been a surgeon

Pause

Wife Ninety-eight?

Tolka The blade's a stiff

Wife I think he's a scamp. The last you'd sleep with in a flesh. I can see us now. Great palms and cedar seats. The walls of coconuts on our baps, the range of idle guitars, our bathtubs gleaming with the dew all over

She moves at Kak

Tolka *Malena*

Pause

Kak Ninety-eight?

They and They smile. *No smile*

Wife Agreed?

He nods, *graciously*. *The Tolka falls off the table*

A drink, Cycles, a drink!

She attacks Kak, covering him with hugs and kisses

Tolka The Tolka didn't care, causing knock-ups a well as about an

(Standing back) And you beautiful?

Pause Kak blinks

You shall be treated like a prince

The Tolka enters with a bottle and pours an evil-looking fluid into the two glasses

The Wife and Kak take the glasses. They raise them to the Tolka, saying the health

All. To the forecast!

They all over. *Pause*

Kak (unconsciously) How can I possibly pay that much?

Tolka That's your problem

Pause

Wife You can't change now

Pause

Tolka and Wife You were our only chance

They both stand delighted, *graciously*

Kak takes his coat and stands *graciously*

Painfully *Pause*

SONG OF THE SOCIAL CRIPPLES

— *After a performance*
and a question and answer

Despite the progress of cartoon

And the world is our lungs,

Despite the soiling of our clothes

And the handbills on our fingers,

We know the world will change,

Not in a land of milk and honey,

But a place of exhilaration pain,

And fire from tumultuous money

Despite the series of our teeth
And the dangers of our chaps
Despite the settes for a wrench
And the bandages on our wrists,
We know etc.

Despite the noses raised our throats
And the scratches on our skin,
Despite the brains of our cows,
And the rifle's constant fire,
We know etc.

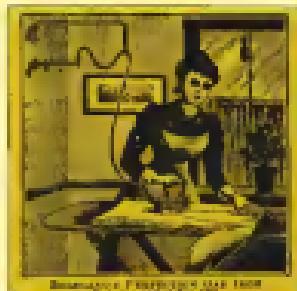


Illustration by V. V. Kozhevnikov

THE OFFICE: AN INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

Kak sits at the desk before a plate which contains a pickled onion and a small spring of parsley. His coat hangs nearby, about half as forever bright and even more *graciously*. *Pause*

Kak I am one lacking children from head to toe. There has been no summer whatsoever this year. Usually the thermometer reaches a little. Even the gourmets have packed up. One of the worst long-ears I can remember. I've been forced to go out to keep the radishes in full bite. Can't even afford the luxury of an occasional pig brother for lunch. It's skin and bone. My coat looks more like a ruglet. I am a disgrace to the civil service. It's no joke. My friends then me as if I were the last of the lepers. Not that I've ever exhibited much in the way of social style or pluck. Hardly the life of the party. Ha ha. But that is grotesque. I have noted. *Pause* What do I do? Stare myself to utter exhaustion and buy a new coat? I've heard of men afraid at sea who robust on leather. Perhaps I could collect some nutrition from myself? There might even be a few calories left in my coat. Men don't live by bread alone. Ha ha. What is it to have a sense of humor?

Painfully *Pause*

AN EXTERIOR MONOLOGUE

Kak quarters the room with a laugh. *No smile* *Pause*

Kak Phosphorus. *Pause* Good for the muscles. *Pause* It's written through the

pantry | Victorian C. (Pause)

Kak takes out a lead pencil, inserts it into a sharpener attached to the side of his desk then walks. He collects some of the sharpener and puts them on his plate. He can never Pass. The Departmental Head comes and watches.

Knockings (Pause)

D. Head: You been watching the copper for months. He's in decline. In fact, I ordered a time-and-motion study on the bugger. The results were horrendous. He halved his productivity in a week. A departmental record. The shame. What can I do? You can't sack a member of the civil service. The only answer, staff, is to create yet another division of the service for him, lower his wages, cut his perks, and hope to Jesus that the inspection team to greater efforts. If only to take a firm grip of himself and disregard his lack of attention to detail. A cheerful note and some leniency would work wonders for the lot.

The Departmental Head walks across to the desk. Passes

(Pointing to the copper) May I?

Kak: Of course. Your Inspection.

The Departmental Head speaks two quarters with a fork and cuts them with such as Kak's words pleased. Passes

D. Head: Thank you.

Kak: Sir?

D. Head: I have some very news for you. (Muttering) Kak, you! You're demoted.

Kak: Gosh

D. Head (annoyed): Is that all you can say?

Kak: I am immune to all the slings and arrows of life. Your Excellency, I have a mission in life.

D. Head (pleasedly): Oh yes.

Kak (semi-defensive): To buy a new case. (Pause)

D. Head: Allow me to be the first to congratulate you. Kak extends a hand which the D. Head grasps.

Kak: I intend to raise the tone of the entire department.

D. Head (scratching his eyebrows): And other what exactly?

Kak: I hadn't thought of that.

D. Head: Not I. But I'd like suggest, in all humility, a spot of plastic surgery.

Kak: A most unlikely candidate?

D. Head: Something more radical, Kak. A daily massage of the face with rough newspaper, the application of a hot iron nail right to the nose, and finally the suspension of a pound of fat from each ear. Smooch's skin, a flat nose, and long ears are definitely in fashion.

Kak: Anything you say, sir.

D. Head: Instead of grapes on walkery floors I can see elegant deserts in sun-bleached pastries, instead of dentures, pretzels instead of colons from your colons, the carelessness.

Kak (surprisedly): That's what I'd treasure most, sir.

D. Head: Plus the warmth.

Kak: I suffer immensely from the cold.

D. Head: I shall even make you round to dinner.

Kak: Macau. Rhubarb creme. Chestnut

puddings. Undiscordant toasters.

D. Head: In the servants' quarters.

Kak: My house looks like an igloo.

D. Head (suspicious): As long as you don't eat too much.

Kak: Of course. (Pause)

(Offering the plate) Some more, sir?

D. Head: Thanks.

He devours the last quarter of meat.

Kak (drowsily): I shall triple my quest-

curing efforts to achieve that aim and

D. Head: Well, first of all double yourself over the job.

He removes a wad of papers from a pocket and slips them to Kak in a tray.

Kak (hastily): Every cloud has a silver lining.

The D. Head snorts.

SONG CONCERNING KAK

Day by day he wastes away
In an effort to compete,
His skin contracts a fly
And the said parasite then he ate.

Day by day he wastes away
In an effort to improve,
He fed as a child in play
While the rain descended through his cap.

Day by day he wastes away
In an effort to expand,
His work is a hoard of pray
Rising in vacuum glued by gland.



OFFICE OF THE DEPARTMENTAL HEAD

D. Head (sitting at the desk): You wished to see me, Kak?

Kak (guitar and growling): So kind of you to see me so soon, sir.

D. Head: How long have you been waiting?

Kak: A mere week.

D. Head: Get out.

Kak: Please, sir, it's about my holiday home.

D. Head: You want a holiday?

Kak: Just my home.

D. Head (ignoring her): I can recommend the Canary Islands. Kak: Quelles de sun and wine, in Spanish fly that would snap a falcon, satanic aqua, because the size of colonies, and, breed-breed breed, whereas clicking their limestone canopies.

Kak: I don't think you should speak of women in that way, sir.

D. Head: I think a virgin. Intent. Promises.

Kak: You research the memory of my mother.

D. Head: You can't measure with your stars (And pixels) Open her eyes.

Kak: We could never afford options, sir.

D. Head: The man's in ideal.

Kak: About that bonus, Your Excellency.

D. Head: How much?

Kak: I believe in integrity.

D. Head: Market entry.

Kak: Sir?

Kak removes the D. Head's hand from his shoulder over a week gratification A week, sir.

D. Head (slipping his hand with a handkerchief) Commitment.

Kak: I shall remember this to my dying day.

D. Head: Don't punish yourself unnecessarily, Kak.

Kak: There is reason, sir.

D. Head: Laugh out and sport yourself a ten-course meal.

Kak (surprisedly): I couldn't.

D. Head: Well, when do you want it?

Kak: Next year.

D. Head: Next year?

Kak (surprisedly): Only fools dash in where wise men fear to tread.

D. Head: Very apt. Listen. In the meantime I'll invest it for you in government bonds. Naught past two five percent.

Kak (surprisedly): Why, thank you, sir.

SONG OF THE ANKLE

— ANKLE

I have a little ankle,
And show it everywhere,
It glitters like a spangle,
And here the poor man stands.

I have a little ankle,
And flick it through the air,
Or hold it at an angle,
And here the poor man stands.

I have a little ankle,
In fact I have a pair,
I love to let them dangle,
And here the poor man stands.

Markout. Pass. Silence. Kak arrives.

Pass. The Auditor comes on. Passes.

A light comes up sharply on Kak sitting in bed in the underclothes. He looks

anxiously, dreamily around, a drowsy

silhouette. Passes.

He gets out of bed, looking around, tired and jaded. He looks before the auditor. Passes.

Kak: Please, God, make them go away. All I want to be is ordinary. Nothing special. Nothing flash. I wouldn't harm a fly. There's not a morsel of harm in me. I've never been a defendant before in a negligence. Believe me. I am who I am. Passes. He sits. Passes. Director's Hammering on roofs. After a while he looks up. The Tailor's Wife has entered.

Wife: Good evening, sir.

Kak: Good evening.

Wife: Good evening.

Kak: Agony.

Power The music ceases

Wife You're lucky to be able to afford a radiator

Kirk It's the only comfort I have left in this goddam heat

Wife There are cheaper ways of achieving that

Kirk (unhappily) Please tell me

Wife Give you one guess

Kirk (unhappily) A new coat? (She looks unconvincingly) You've come about the material? (She sighs again) I have a test

Sighs over the floor

Kirk Comfortable?

Wife Perfect

Kirk Who's your husband?

Wife The only mention of that man brings tears to my eyes

Kirk Marriage must be a wonderful institution

Wife It takes a lot of leaving

Kirk (unhappily) I can only speculate

Wife (tearfully) What's a card?

We should send a little. Please

Kirk Like a drink?

Wife What's offering?

Kirk Tea

Wife Tea?

Kirk I don't drink anything else

Wife (anxiously) The husband drank my tea

Kirk Will I both the kettle?

Wife Don't bother

Kirk (bitterly) To business, eh?

She walks and removes a piece of material from a bag

Wife Two per cent wool

Kirk (unhappily and dryly) Really? That all?

Wife The real is gastronomic synthesis

Kirk (dryly)

Wife A baguette at the sacrosanct press

Kirk What a way with language you have!

Wife (grinding the material on her lap) Would you like a test?

At first she material

Kirk It's as soft as a soufflé and as strong as a moccasin

She looks at him shrewdly

Wife Would you like a smell?

At least over your neck

Kirk (unconsciously) Ah, like the Unholy spring

Wife I'm flattered

She smells at Kirk. He looks a little embarrassed

(Grinding) Let's say it wrapped around you

Kirk (crossing, evaluating) Yes, I am a little under dressed. My deepest apologies

She wraps the material around her tightly

Power

Wife (sighing) Ah, a real Don Giovanni

She avoids the material over his neck, then his head

Wife I will perch some salt Sabean for your collar

Power She knows him though

Kirk Please! I am weak from hunger

Wife (grinding him) Be a man

She sits here, wrapped in the material, and strokes him on the head. He groans as she runs his unyielding hand along his lap

Power She wrings her tail around it like

then lowers it vertically up and down on

Kirk

How does it feel to have the shoe as the other foot? Adhesive? Right? (He groans Power) Hardly a foot. More like a little toe

Kirk (unconsciously) I'm being swallowed up!

Wife (bouncing up and down) One small toe does not make a spring

Kirk (grinding) Help me, Mother. O parent of creation...

Kirk (unconsciously) Help! What's it Unholy?

Kirk (pathetically) All I want is a new overcoat

A PROLETARIAN CANTICLE

— crescendo in roar monotone

It is love that saturates us all.

A plate of soup is not enough.

Star the quotidian hot mealball,

When once it tastes are rough

It is love that saturates us all.

A mackintosh is not enough,

Nor the Persian kimono short,

When once it tastes are rough

It is love that saturates us all.

A game of cards is not enough,

Nor the Edwardian music hall,

When once it tastes are rough

It is love that saturates us all.

A cigarette is not enough,

Nor the Persian parlor call,

When once it tastes are rough

Blackout. Dvorak's *Massinique* on violin. A light comes up on Kirk. It's really

a arranged oblation on his birthday over

Times of joy excess does his face. The

The most continuous for a while than more

general light comes up. The Fairies

are out and about Kirk. The music subsides

Tinker: It's a sort of art (He advances the

near) I have followed him for miles,

sometimes from the near, sometimes from

the front, sometimes I have dashed along

side lanes past, to catch a glimpse as he

strayed across the mouth of a distant

street. This is the climax of a long and

arduous career (Power) I can tell a satisfied

customer (Power) Yes. This man will go

long way. My god, my masterpiece, is a

man no success. Why the lad now walks

with the liberty of a fox, is as arrogant as a

rooster at dusk, and, in the words of my

wife, has become overnight a deplorable red

coastal-coast, a piggying with the quip,

the very handiwork of style and refined

consciousness (Power) I could follow him to

the ends of the earth. Except I crave a

drink. (Power) Again. We remove a floor

and sweep. (Power) Clean, my friend. (Power) I

will see you all the best. (Power)

Tinker (everybody) Please!

Wife I've been searching the whole city. I

thought you'd blown straight at last.

Tinker I've been walking

Wife You funny little thing.

Tinker Like a dog?

Wife To (Power) Please?

Tinker What are we going to do with the

money?

Wife Who cares?

Tinker I'd suggest a holiday. A couple of weeks in a health spa. Fresh air. Nudist events. Conversation. Gai Rummy. Pork on the spit. You name it. (Power) I had it on my corner.

Wife (taking her gently by the arm) Not unaged.

Tinker True, my sweet, true. After all, I only have one eye.

They laugh. They sing.

The Departmental Head enters

D. Head (surprisedly) Ahah! The new overcoat. Congratulations. Kirk. (Kirk doesn't mind) You've a credit to the department. (Power) I feel compelled to throw a departmental party for the dandies.

Kirk (dryly, shaking) I don't deserve it, sir.

D. Head (dryly) This is definitely a cause for celebration.

Tinker Indeed it is.

D. Head We shall observe the new overcoat with much delight.

Tinker (dryly) Thank you.

D. Head And who are you?

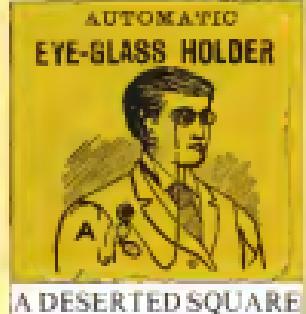
Tinker (with great pleasure) The gentleman's usher, sir. Monsieur Le Cyclope. And this is the apple of my eye, this Cyclope, of the needle and dagger company. Madame Pastore de la Marquise Cosa Nostra.

Wife (removing her coat) Any time, sir. D. Head (dryly) Delighted. Well, on with the fest. Three cheers for Kirk. Hip, hip, hip!

All. Hooray!

The Streeters are thrown by the situation into the audience. Balloons released, sir. Dvorak's *Massinique* starts again, grinning louder and more frantic from about. The door opens and Kirk finds blackouts following by telecast.

Power Kirk is heard sobbing in the dark.



Light up on Kirk half-kneeling. A man, wearing old sugar bags, stands over Kirk with a large red fist. He smacks Kirk in the side of the head, then moves Kirk under his arm, and continues to thump. The man has Kirk upon Power.

The man taps his foot impatiently. Kirk stands slowly, unblocks his fist, and holds it to the man. Kirk's underclothes are now purged and are shorn. The man throws the coat over his shoulders, feels good. Power



He begins to fumble to get up a button
Kali does so, pushing him.

Man (surprised): Not a word to anyone
(Kali laughs) What do I look like?

Kali: You're indistinguishable from the
rest of mankind.

Man (surprised): What do you mean by
that?

Kali: You're, er, anonymous.

Man (surprised): Anonymous, eh?

Kali: Don't be ridiculous!

He snatches Kali's tie on the floor. Kali falls
to the ground. The Man gets on his feet.

Man (surprised): Can't stand off.

He pulls up and down, suddenly picks up
a gorilla in a dinner suit. *Pause*

I think I'll step along to the ballroom tonight.

He leaves. *Pause* And goes.

Kali (helpfully): Help

He slowly gets up.

(Confused): Help?

Pause

(Surprised): Help?

Police: A Policeman enters.

Pol.: What is that, a national racket?

Kali: I want to lodge a complaint.

Pol.: No, another one.

Kali: You been assaulted and robbed.

Pol.: You are.

Kali (surprised): A brand-new overcoat.

Police: Don't burden me with your trifles.

Kali: It cost me seven years wages plus the
whole of my holiday bonus.

Pol.: A thousand, eh?

Kali: Did you see anything?

Pol.: Most. Shaggy. A bunch of rascals.

Kali: Nothing else?

The Policeman shuffles his feet. *Pause*

Do you want a description?

Pol.: No.

Kali: He had a mustache —

Pol.: And feet open?

Kali: Which curled under his chin.

Pol.: And a scar on one cheek?

Kali: Oh, yes.

Pol.: I thought as much.

Kali: And you're going to take all this down?

Pol.: My memory is infallible.

Kali: Where are you arrested?

Pol.: Nowhere in particular. I just passed

the streets.

Kali: Where do I report?

Pol.: Next, next. Pick a day.

Kali (surprised): Tuesday last.

Pol.: Excellent. I'll make sure I'm not

there on time.

Kali: Ha ha?

Pol.: Ha ha?

Kali: Thank you for your help.

The Policeman leaves. *Pause* Kali looks

pleased. Then puzzled.

I think I should go higher. *Pause* (I did.) I
was no senior officer. Then even more
senior, and I reached the Chief of Police.

His Ubiquity. All to no avail. Overruled.

see like beetles, he said. They whiz
through the night. *Pause* I was in
completa and still deeper. *Pause* (I was)
Then some bright spark suggested
I should go even farther. I should see the
Impostor. *Pause* who apparently
possessed the key to all doors, the
combination to all safes, etc. *Pause* I
did. *Pause* What a gentleman! A man
One who finds sheer time to help the little
folk.

SONG OF THE IMPORTANT PERSON

— come bring justice
I believe in Chapman,
The touchscreen and electric shock,
I believe in the editor's song,
The reporter dropped on a rock
I believe in censorship,
Published they're in equal tank,
I believe in currying who,
And downing savants in a tank
I believe in government,
The orderly control of greed,
I believe in the means and end,
The mongrel state of those I find.

The Important Person sits down at the
desk, takes an enormous quill, and with
supervision, punctuates a letter.

LP: Another unwilling participant
(Pause) I wish they'd disappear! *Pause*)
Anyone would think I was elected City
Chairman *Pause* (Whatever difference that
makes) *Pause* (We did hold an election
once. Everyone voted. One hundred per
cent shabby. We decided after that the
people were corrupt.)

At City council, The Important Person

without looking up. *Abush ibn the Inner*

Pause

(At last) Something personal?

Clerk: Your Excellency

LP: How do you do?

Clerk: Sorry at 11 Stamps

LP: Today is Wednesday

Clerk: I forgot

LP: Proposed, soon

Clerk: A dark, lone outside. He doesn't

do interviews, I mean, audience.

LP: Does he have any money?

Clerk: Not a cent.

LP: Tell him I'm busy. He'll have to wait

(The Clerk leaves. *Pause*) What presumption!

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

He sat in a long, rickety and light w-

Power. He receives back parts for free up
Time for a minute.

Power

(Innumerable) I wish I were at home, in
the bosom of the family, learning to
Mickey, in a barbershop, sitting on a stack
of money — or at the lounge, exploring
perhaps — quality up on some postal
process. They usually arrange an
escape for me — put some poor devils out
of his misery.

He drifts off to sleep. He wakes. After
some time the Clerk comes roundly. He
wakes the Important Person with the quill
(Quivering) *Quivering* How did you?

The clerk looks weary.

He looks magnificently fat. *Pause*

Clerk: Sorry, Sir. I beg your

LP: Is it Friday already?

Clerk (surprised): The clerk still awaits
your pleasure.

LP: (surprised) Send the necessary paper to
My Excellency for me. The Clerk leaves as
Kali comes dressed in tuxedo and his
office coat.

Kali (surprised): Sir?

LP: (surprised) What's your problem?

Kali: I have business on my hand.

LP: Wrong building.

Kali: I have come to demand your help.

LP: Who is this amirite?

Kali: I have been flooded at every
quarter, or A whole party of party
officials, shunks, taggers and
moneypoops. I have heard, however, that
you, as a man of status, possess not only
power but sensitivity, a soft eye for the
miserable child.

LP: (Surprised) *Surprised*?

Kali: I've heard nothing but good reports.
I come in bonded items. You are my last
chance.

LP: (surprised) What's all about?

Kali (surprised): See, some workdays —

LP: Just a moment. Have you been
through the correct channels?

Kali (surprised): Correct channels?

LP: (surprised) And magnificently. You
filed an application with the appropriate
clerk, in the meantime been fisked by the
Supervision Board, grilled by the Taxicab
Council, persecuted by the Under-
Secretary, etc. etc.

Kali (surprised): No.

LP: (surprised): No?

Kali (surprised): It's urgent, sir. *Pause*

LP: Nothing is urgent. *Pause* He lights
an acrid cigarette. *Pause* I have all the
time in the world. *Pause* And backs out

Power. An unbroken. *Pause*

Light! *Pause* I could've been there.

SONG OF OUR CITY

In our city the wind never ceases,
Froze every cold quarter in howls,
In ice-age gales and blizzards,
It lashes brash rates and ghouls.

In our city the sun never sparkles,
Both winter and summer it's static,
In drops the size of marbles,
On frigidities as grey as charcoals.

In our city the moon never crosses,
But miffles back muggers and slugs,

With ribbons and dresses,
To burn of a funeral dress.

In every man never trouble,
Then his hair fits between neck and
An woman greatly trouble
Marriages in the dark.

The music of the song continues for a while. Kuk stands excepted by his bell-hopping father. He carries his tray of the last Pauper.

He takes off his after coat, his shoes,
and trousers. He folds the clothes neatly.
*Pauper. He stands in his garments
underneath. He climbs into bed. Pauper.*

Kuk. The only thing we do (Mr. tea-chester) I had to let the Mr. dress off again
Sunday. It's an Indian summer. The
fire is dead. *Pauper.*

Stretos. Turn off the radiator!

There is no radiator. He carries his bed.
Please pull down the blind, Mother, this
sun is burning. My bed has full of
steam and green steam. Thank you...
that's better. How do you like my
outfit? A large patterned hat, white
trousers, and white shirt... dressed
so well. Never mind a day's work in
my whole life. Here's no you, contraries.

A wonderful party champagne and
screches. Too bad. Still all
good things must come to an end. Come in
I am, oh Masses! Bed soon, miss them,
but not. *Pauper. He suddenly lifts his head.*

I heard a noise *(Pauper.)* A thief! He's
stealing my overcoat. Stop, thief! (He gets
out of bed.) Give me that back. Come in
Pauper. As if you need a coat in this
weather. He is *(Pauper.)* Come (He gets
fully back into bed. *Pauper. Mr. Pauper.)*
He's under the bed! Help! Help! *Circumstances
dread and loud! Help!*

Pauper. Sighs. The Landlady enters.
Landlady. What the hell is wrong with
you?

Kuk (creakingly). There's a thief under my
bed. At least one. Probably seven.
She looks under the bed.

Landlady. Nothing.

Kuk. They got away?

Landlady. I'm afraid so. (She finds his
trousers.)

Kuk. Thank you, Mother.

Landlady. I'll call a doctor.

Pauper. Kuk. What did he say?

Landlady. That I should order a new
coffin. You're too poor for oak.

Kuk. The wood treatment.

Landlady (applying a wet rag to his
(overcoat.) Plus a cold poultice.)

Kuk. All this time.

Landlady. Better?

Kuk. I had a new man. *(Pauper.)* There is
too much badness in the world. *(Pauper.)*
As cool as a cucumber.

Landlady. The doctor thought he should
make some sort of gesture.

Kuk. I shall pay him handsomely next
week. Now that I've come into a lot of
money. Congratulate me on my promotion,
Mother.

Landlady. Congratulations, Kuk.

Kuk. I shall be able to buy fifteen

overcoats. *(Pauper. He shudders.)* I shall be
a happy man. *Pauper. He sits. Pauper.*
The Landlady exits for a while. Pauper. She
scratches the pocket of his coat and
trousers. Pauper. She sings her shoulders.
Pauper. She leaves him on the floor. Pauper.

PAUPER'S SONG

When I die
Bury me in a box
Of weeping willow,
And let me be
In a field of phlox
With dandelion for my pillow.

When I die
Bury me on a day
Of sun and flowers,
And let me be
In a field of hay
As compost for the ploughmen.

When I die
Bury me in a suit
Of silk and crimson,
And let me be
In a field of fruit,
A banquet for the worms.

*The Pauper. Pauper sits at the desk
looking at some letters. His expensive
overcoat hangs neatly on a hook. After a
while he sings.*

Pauper. A man's day is never done. *(Pauper.)*
Lamentably I. Neither is a woman's. *(Pauper.)*
I. Ah, the responsibility continues
of the sexes. *(Pauper.)*

*(Sings.) I. I concur with Byron. *(Pauper.)*
Tonight, for example, I have no desire
whatever to go home to my wife, whom I
love dearly. She will weep. Large miserable
tears. Too bad. Instead, I shall sleep in the
company of men, enjoy an abundant
convalescence, and afterwards attack the
flakpots. *(He stands.)* I spend a few
hours on Herbie.*

*He goes to his coat, removes a pocket,
extracts a cigarette and lights it. He*

*continues smoking and singing, with his
back to the rest.*

*He disappears up into the ceiling. He
goes to replace the pocket and finds the
root gone. He groans. He checks the floor,
under the desk. Growing panic. He looks
around frightened.*

Music and fog start to roll over the area.

Pauper. Help!

He tries to run away and fails.

Pauper. Help! Police!

*Police. The Policeman appears as the fog
increases.*



Thank God you've come, Sergeant.

Pete Constable.

LP. I suppose you'll do. I'd like to report
a robbery.

Pauper (sitting on a pad and pencil). Could you describe the striped-up article?

LP. An overcoat. Worth two thousand.

Pauper (taking shoulders). Pauper?

LP. I just disappeared two hours ago.
There was nobody. Does the next.

Pauper. I shall accuse the recorded, sir.

Pauper (singing). Every, sir.

LP. (polite). I will skin the bastard alive!

Pauper. I'd suggest the Chinese rashed. The
death of a thousand cuts. More inside.

They took laugh and step one another on
the back. Kuk appears in the fog. He is
completely naked with puffed-out cheeks.
He holds a pen in one hand and a blank
piece of paper in the other. They are his
Terror.

Pauper. Kuk option his mouth and blank
ink deposit over his lower lip and down his
neck and chest. They scream, and click to
their hands.

LP. I didn't mean it!

Pauper. It's the God of the Boys.

LP. Regulations?

Pauper. Forget not!

LP. Marion.

Pauper. I shall treat every case seriously in
the future.

LP. I'm going straight home to my wife.

Pauper. I did search the area.

LP. (producing his wallet). Would you like
some money?

Pauper. A new coat?

LP. A holiday in the Azores?

Kuk turns to the man.

LP. And Pauper (together). Don't go!

Kuk disappears. Pauper.

The Man appears in Kuk's overcoat
through the mist. Shakes his head and flicks
at them through.

The Impatient Person's overcoat
descends from above and flops backwards
and forwards.

They scream general and whisper.

A slow fall to Blackout. Pauper Silence.

A green light comes up on Gogol in the
fire.

SONG OF GOGOL

The world is not quite what it seems,
Behind the smiles all love and peace.

Wriggling a nervous system,

Where corpses shake on barren ground.

The world is not quite what it seems,

Behind the clock of day and night.

Over the tenebrosities of dreams,

Where men and moon and no light.

The world does not quite meet its needs,

Behind the battles of food and drink.

Open a cannibal in tweeds,

Who bathes in natural gas and zinc.

The world does not quite meet its needs,

Behind the warmth of coats and caps.

Slaves a contented of words,

Where species cohabit with ghosts.

Fate or blackout. Good company from

the invisible Silence.

South Australian Theatre Company

SEASON ONE 1977

The School for Scandal — R. B. Sheridan

The Cherry Orchard — Anton Chekov

Ruth Cracknell in Just Ruth (premiere)

All My Sons — Arthur Miller

Too Early To Say — Ron Blair and Michael Cova (premiere)

Artistic Director: Colin George

General Manager: Wayne Maddern

Theatre in Education Director: Roger Chapman

Associates: Ron Blair, Ruth Cracknell, Leslie Dayman, Ronald Falk,
Rodney Ford, Daphne Grey, Edwin Hodgeman, Brian James,
Patricia Kennedy, Kevin Miles, Dennis Olsen, Kevin Palmer,
David Williamson.



The School for Scandal
March 1977

"'The School for Scandal' shows the SATC could become a
classical company of the calibre of Canada's Stratford National Theatre . . .
The production is a meticulous masterpiece . . ."

The Sunday Mail

"Top marks to a stylish School!"
The Australian

"masterly kick-off to the South Australian Theatre Company's 1977 season!"
The News

"brilliant . . . newly assembled company!"
The Advertiser

Parachute Productions presents

nimrod theatre

■ BENJAMIN FRANKLIN — Outrageous
winner of the 1978 National Critics
Award: the Best Play, the Best Actor
and the Best Director! ■

after seven months and over 175 stunning performances



Adelaide — strictly limited season on national tour,
prior to New York & London productions!

Her Majesty's Theatre

from Thursday 14 April — 18 performances only!

Gordon Chater in The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin

by Steve J Spears

directed by Richard Wherrett
designed by Larry Eastwood
Theatrical performance of the Year! —

Australian ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR —

Gordon Chater holds the top spot for the best piece of acting I have seen in any play, local or imported — Taffy Davies, The Sun
Quite Superb . . . The Hit Australian Play — London Evening Standard
Electrifying — National Times
The Best Play, the Best Performance and Best Production in Sydney in 1976 — Variety, New York

A splendid full-throttle performance: finely observed, outrageously funny, achingly moving — The Australian You'll be Knocked out! — The Daily Mirror

Mondays to Fridays at 8.15
Saturday at 5.00 and 8.30

Mid bookings to March Festival Centre, 500 Willoughby Avenue, Sydney 2000
Season booking bookings Tel. 02 552 3000
For 1978 of Box office phone Lucy, Tel. 354 9288 —
see 1978 program

The Eloquence of Benjamin Franklin

"Even the ever-straight public servants of Canberra got the play's message . . ."

The Eloquence of Benjamin Franklin by Steven Sondheim. Canberra Playhouse, Canberra. Opened 13 March (Reviewed at National 25 August 1976). Director: Richard Wharrell. Designers: Harry Eastwood, Robert G. Bruce, Gordon Chase.

After the opening at the National, I remember some of us saying that the message of the play, social opposition of an individual on such a pretentious scale, lacked plausibility in today's Sydney.

Now, one week before the Canberra opening, the city's tax-ad shop was raided by the ACT police for handing snapshots and magazines picturing underage people in lewd poses. Had this been an adult novel, had that adult been shooting from shorts with shotguns, and had one of his other people been related to Mr Stanley or Mr Endicott (as Mastra is in the play), the action's capital magic very well have had the sort of Robert G. Bruce in *Prisoner* (apart, of course, from the living room that rules, with Quasimodo and Harriet at the till).

Avant-garde in society's new whipping-boy, the same society that allowed the bell out of mouth in the first place (this is precisely the theme of one of Gershwin's novels, *Parapluie*). It is hypocritical that I believe Sondheim aiming at the play, the hypocrisy of a society that, free on drugs yet looks compelled to oppress young people for the crime of choosing their own friend. The comedy in the play — the wonderful amorous conundrums of Double Dutch meet — reflects to makeover the tragedy of the last scene.

Sondheim, as a playwright, is a grand talent, much like John Battsek — a political playwright whose work is scattered with tough laughs, tenderness, and hyperbolic flights of language that entertain and drive the message home at the same time. Richard Wharrell is a director of enormous scope who often succeeds to enrich the compassion of a character. He has done it here so very well. It is the compassion he infuses into Robert G. Bruce which helps us identify with the man and his torment. Even the ever-straight public servants of Canberra, at the first night, got the play's message through molarization which they nervously laughed at every bit of ambiguous doublets.

The acting, needless to say, is quite fantastic. It's hard to imagine the part being done by anyone else now, but this was the

case with Peter Cunnane's Mark O'Neill and it no doubt will be with Peter Carroll's Brother Snell, there's so much self-harmour about Gordon Chisholm doing the part. This reinforces the feeling in the first part that, maybe, it is all a harmless game. Then, when he is in bed struggling, himself in stage, he becomes all the more sprung.

Harry Eastwood is certainly one of our finest clowns. The act is terrific in every way. Eastwood's earthshaking acts never have that snappy one-line realism of entertainers like Eric Willis. And his own clownish work always has purpose, it doesn't just fill the space with burlesque gags. I'm glad the programme features Eastwood together with the actor, playwright, and director. We have to few

good scenographers and we should treat them, as Noland always does, importantly.

There's no reason why this national tour won't work. The production was wisely designed for the proscenium stage. And if the message turns out to be too heavy-headed for today's Sydney, as some have said, the provincial centres, where, as Sondheim says, Farina-Knave-Boat, and Lame-As-to-Boar in the law, will have a long way to go. I have my doubts about the viability of a tour to Japan, however, which seems to be planned. Too much of the play's theatricality derives from words and characters created through words (it couldn't be done any other way, obviously). The National might consider sending *Young Mr. Lincoln*. The Japanese have a long, venerable tradition. I am afraid of at least three considerations that who would more like Roy Kinnear than the himself would have cared to admit.



Lust for Power or Perils at Parramatta

"They left their Oz inhibitions at the door and booed, hissed, cheered . . ."



Lust for Power or Perils at Parramatta, written and directed by Michael Boddy. Music Hall Theatre, Parramatta, Neutral Bay, NSW. Opened 12 March. Musical arrangements and original music by Alan Harvey. Choreography: Michael O'Keeffe.

Cast: Patricia Smythe, John Allen, Terence Wilton, Gail Miller, Sarah Partridge, Anna Semple, Harry Masterson, John Blanchard, Jordan Clew Marshall, Marianne, Giselle Proctor, Hattie Stewart, Alan Harvey, Peter Ross Blanchard, Jenkins, Jim Blakely, Carter, Alexander Price, Sykes, Dean Cross, Mally, Wendy Spennell, Polly, Carol Adams.

The Music Hall, Sydney's original theatre restaurant, has rediscovered Australia and it's a bit of all right, mate. Fair dinkum! The new show *Lust for Power or Perils at Parramatta* goes back tongue-in-cheek to the naughty old early colonial days of Governor Macquarie. And it makes a refreshing change from spectre-mouldering masques and bacchanals by gaudily lit London. Wt. England!

Whatever pre-natal traumas may have had Miller may have gone through behind the plush and opulencies when he found himself with a March deadline and the

4. Maria Prerauer is joint critic and arts feature writer for *The Australian* and wrote by permission of that paper's editor.

redder iron of his playwright-director Stanley Walsh (back on the boards at the Old Tote and Ensemble), he bravely brought in Alfred Stenker (Young Doctoring on Channel 9), and his imaginative designer Tom Lingwood (working with the Australian Opera) — all members of his last few hits — plus have been happily go armed by costume-rie Gianna Millet (queens, can-can girls, 1901 flapper girls, etc), cast on back, well in early unconvincing whackers, and look forward to another long run. For Lassie's livery!

Michael Boddy, of the legendary King O'Malley and other stories, has both wit and dash and dressed this latest opus with great gusto. It's an unmeasurably blend of hot and Essex presented with much theatrical expertise. The melodrama may have had a nose complaint — like so many of our deserved feedback — but Boddy has rounded the formula. It's goodish versus badness: upstage and virtue always triumphant. Only a fool or a special kind of genius would attempt to temper with so astoundingly tested a tradition as this, where the family tree goes back to medieval miracle plays and beyond. All Boddy's lived himself in and wrote from an the this-worse-than theme. And it comes over well.

The same could, the loony black-moustached villain in Alice Harvey alias Hattie Stewart, "a roller of a scoundrel" with designs on the men of the colony and — you've guessed it — the governor's young, buxom and, of course, wealthy niece Terence Wilton. No doubt any slight resemblance to the ego-tripping founding fathers, such as John Macquarie, is purely and absurdly coincidental. But it would take more than Stewart to pull the wool over our discerning eyes!

Terence, naturally, falls for our hero, Harry Masterson (pensionable John Blanchard), an emigrant or — shock, horror — freed convict. So Stewart plots to set him up — it's all abouted by John Allen's Cedric Forrester-Singhle, the inevitable silly-as-silly type, with Clive Marshall and Ross Blanchard adding to colourful catalogues.

But the night really belongs to pretty blonde Anna Semple's exuberant lady's companion, Sarah Partridge, whose many splendid attributes include boots with spangles towards playing right out of her strategically lowered bottom without ever quite managing to make it, an extramarital addiction to losing her skirt to a criss and a few lots, an ultra-high-kick. Her extremely sense of timing couldn't be bettered this side of Casanova and she has refined the game of ironic self-pity/foolish down to a truly smug art. Gail Miller's Terence Wilton is also rare among simpletons in adding spice and spark to the obligatory sugar-coating.

Once again musical director Des Harro has composed all the original numbers, which include at least one rollicking showstopper. And he rises, like some sainted means organism, from the bowels of the theatre on to the stage and back down again again while unfailingly playing the piano. Douglas Smith's lauding cuspions and aria are more conventional than Lingwood's, but very effective for all that, while choreographer Michael O'Keeffe's lively jigs have an authentic touch of Mersey about them.

And once more the weekend wits were out in force and the packed audience loved every minute of it. They left their Oz inhibitions at the door, let down their hair, and replace with excellent food and drink, boozed, bawled, cheered, sang along and showered the actors with much good-humoured if uncharred abuse. The daily grind could indeed have been statutory now. And maybe the secret weapon of all good Music Hall is just this kind of pestilential therapy, better by far than a trip to the psychiatrist. And surely much more fun.



Travesties

"As a play, it is pure champagne for the intellect, and as a production, a barely flawed, exhilarating night out"



Travesties by Tom Stoppard. National Upstart Theatre, Sydney Opened 11 March (First performed at National 21 January 1976; Director, Ken Heseltine; designer, Kate Carpenter; choreographer, Cherie Rizzo; musical director, Robert Simpson; Henry Law, John Gutter, Tristan Taun, Ralph Campbell, Gwendoline Fay, Kristin James, Joyce, Matthew O'Neill, Cecily Cawthron, Barbara Stephens, Lorna, Barry Otto, Nedra, Mavis D'Arcy, Benson, Robert Dorn)

Although Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, an uproarious farce about the collapse of Lenin, James Joyce, Tristan Tzara and Henry Carr of the British Consulate in the spy-tormented Zurich of 1917, is probably the cleverest comedy of ideas in the English language since *Man and Superman*, it is not a wholly original conception. At the age of 13, George Bernard Shaw, in *The Good King Charles's Golden Bough*, did much the same thing, which was to juxtapose (or juxtapose) a setting in an English country house in the summer of 1888, of Isaac Newton, the discoverer of gravity, George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, Godfrey Kneller, the precursor of Hogarth, the Merry Monarch himself, and Neil Gwynne, and to tell them, chiding, as they like the usual Shawish strong-machines.

It's wrong, I know, to carp about the cleverest and most intellectually interesting night in Sydney theatre in years, but it is fair to say, I think, that Shaw did it rather better, in that he had all five of his characters answering each other back, whereas Stoppard leaves Lenin stranded on a soaring monologue about the place of the artist in the new world order and pads him off to the Finland Station with only a vacuous raspberry to ruffle his placid countenance. Perhaps the author, a Czech by birth and something of a Cubanista himself, I would hazard a guess, by philosophical predilection, was unusually unable to put himself in the shoes of the founders of his country's most red aspect on his side. Or was the Lenin success part of the '90 reasons excused from the play on the night of the dress rehearsal? I'd really love, at any rate, to read the cutting-score closer than the fourth act of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (in which the love of Cheshire and Ffion is much expanded), it should be a master treasure.

That being said, all due to praise, Stoppard's ideas were never very original anyway. *Assassination and Government*, as an idea, has been a fixture of every other university since more time entrepreneurial,

L to R: John Gutter as Henry Carr, Barbara Stephens as Cecily, Barry Otto as Lenin.

The Pleasure of his Company

“This drawing-room comedy has lost little of its appeal . . .”

The Pleasure of his Company by Samuel Taylor with Corinna Otis Skinner. Theatre Royal Sydney. Opened March 14. Director, David Langton, continuing the original London production by Peter Duff. Design, Terry Parsons; lighting, Mark Charles.
 Cast: *Wendy Douglas*, *Barbara Jeane Macmillan*, *George Stanley*, *Holloman*, *Tom Shoberly*, *David Langton*, *Katherine Daugherty*, *Carol Royle*, *Janice Pock*, *Charlene Vane*, *Stuart MacIntosh*, *Vivian Martin*, *Troy*, *David Godard*.

There is still a lot of enjoyable entertainment to be found in Sydney's theatre and the well-made play with a recognisable beginning, middle and end. It is, however, a fading genre and one has to go back a few years for the better examples, such as *The Pleasure of his Company*, by Samuel Taylor with Corinna Otis Skinner.

Given a limited season of 22 performances at Sydney's new Theatre Royal, the drawing-room comedy set in the San Francisco of 1938 has lost little of its appeal since we first saw it at the old Royal in October 1960. In part this can be attributed to the general excellence of a strong cast headed by three interesting arias in Douglas, Barbara Jeane Macmillan, Holloman and David Langton.

Opposite us had the superbly giddy performance by Paul Elford and Gerald Jay for Paul Elford (Australia) Pty Ltd, by arrangement with the MLC Centre Management in association with The Australian Dramatherapy Trust and Playbill (Australia) Pty Ltd.

What we saw was a restaging by David Langton of last year's original London revival directed by Peter Duff. For this Parsons has come out of retirement of a sort to repeat a role he has played many times in many places. Indeed, it has been stated that the role was written for him and that may well be true, although it appears to be in some conflict with a claim in the 1960 programme that the lead characters were created on Broadway by the two who played them as briefly as here, Australia's Cyril Fletcher and Max Shiner.

Her contribution to authorship was mainly the dialogue, and in an actress herself, she has written lines that are eminently quotable.

Parsons, at 66, retains all the grace and debonair appearance that marked his long career in films. He gives an easy-minded reading of the part of “Pogo” Pook, the wealthy widower who returns

unexpectedly after 15 years to the home of his former wife, Katherine, to attend the wedding of their daughter, Jessie, to a young David Godard.

There is, however, not much depth or colour to his characterisation. His voice is high and he does not project strongly enough. There is a superficiality to the charm — “charming company”, one unperceived therapist called it — which he is called upon to strip in his selfish but successful campaign to persuade Jessie to defer marriage for a year and to a host in a continuation of his self-indulgent typy-style posturing.

“Pogo” is, of course, a type that rarely, if ever, moves outside a supervisor's imagination and it calls for a special flair to flesh the character out. In his title role, Parsons undoubtedly exhibited that quality, but it was little in evidence here.

Jessie is most understandingly and appealingly played by Christine Austin. She can make credible her name association with her father so to follow her father is motivated by a loyal desire to defend him a residue of the companionship he missed by not being a part of her growing-up.

However, the one whose company gives greatest pleasure is that, the sister and only odd-same-sexual Stanley Holloman — now 88, according to the public prints. It is a joy to watch him take command of any scene at will. He has virtually only to press a couple of words to be noticed.

It is also undoubtedly a pleasure for a great many to meet in the flesh the actor who endowed himself in tens of thousands of Australian interviews as the equally and courageous Lord Ballarat of *Lydia's Disinherited*, David Langton. As Jessie's stepfather he has little chance to show, but the polish and expertise manage to take advantage of every opportunity offered.

As the girl's mother, still attracted to her former husband, Carol Royle once again gives a beautifully rounded portrayal, every line, every expression, every gesture a living confirmation.

Vivian Martin is ruggedly convincing as Jessie's disaffected Saucy, bad-tempered by his concern for his poor hall, and unattractive David Godard scores an a career role as Troy, the Japanese servant.

The elegant setting, designed by Terry Parsons, was imported from London together with the stars.

and so, as an aside, was *The Real Inspector Hooch*, in which the critics appear on the stage and give their comments as the play unfolds. What was original was the intellectual game with which Stoppard worked the ideas out. Joyce comes in a whirlwind of irreverence, when Carr (as the Duke of Algy in *The Reappearance of King George*) ponderously extenuates him (to the consternation of the drawing-room audience, who in *Ulysses*) on the origins of the Dadaist movement and ends deviously walking with his book. In great Edwardian idleness Carr reassumes the great days in the trenches, where he and Carr each two parts of *Woyzeck*, and finally points the safety of sloping Switzerland in spite of the spread of spots and counterplots that make it impossible to get a seat at the box-ticker-ticker, and gives the news of a sexual complaint in Russia with the words, “A sexual revelation! Unaccompanied women smoking in the open, that sort of thing?”

Carr, an actual historical figure (but who succeeded Stoppard by turning up alive and indeed on opening night, in one of the more brilliant couplings of this century's theatre. Seen as a man as old and bucking as a pensioner with a flooded memory, a Wilder dandy, a Wilder was too), a Prufrockish self-doubter and a Shavian sceptic, whose actions and opinions, wedged into the plot and a good deal of the dialogue of *The Reappearance of King George* (the handbag containing Joyce's and Carr's manuscripts get mixed up, Carr, in a fit of manic panic, pretends he is Jack Taun's wicked passenger brother, Tristan, and so, to some comic sum up all the disappointments of the 20th century, and he is, among other things, a frequent role for a Shavian actor, which likely he gets. John Gielgud is charming, a wily, articulate half-wit wrestling in the arms of glory for the greatest boon of anonymity. As Hennell, the champagne-drinking Marquess, John Davis is a perfect monolith of expressionistic insouciance. In Gwendolen and Cecily, Joyce's and Lenin's lady assistants, Fay Kalton and Barbara Stephan manage the difficult measure of (intellectual) hunger and sexual repartee with lady-like multifluity, and Marlene D'Sylva as Joyce gets into her big-truth audience a conscious, deceptively honest, but at a joy to hear. The other, more repellent roles of Luria and his wife and the hamperous Triton Taun were less than perfectly beautified by Barry Otto, Martin D'Arcy and Ralph Cawdell. Larry Eastwood's art is perfect and Ken Harler's direction without fault.

The play has much to tell us of the banking, van and swordfish, after-lunch, the dull and earnest nature of the two political here, the慷慨-generous frivolity of the artistic amateur, the meaning of courage, the meaning of a Japanese identity) and the nature of memory, and never have we been told such things so gaudily. As a play, it is pure champagne for the intellect, and as a production, a barely flawed, exhilarating, considerable night out.

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown



"Nicholas Papademetriou's Red Baron act brought the house down . . ."

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown Book, music and lyrics by Clark Gesner. Independent Theatre Studios. Directed by Michael. Director Hugo Marmo, musical director, Lindsay Partridge, piano. Lindsay Partridge, percussion, Bill Edwards (drums), Lucy Vassaray, Charlie Brown, Hugo Marmo, Lucy Coddie-Watson, Linda Robert Wells, Snoopy, Nicholas Papademetriou, Piggy, Wendy Tully, Shirley, Tony Coddie.

You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown is an old show in search of a new audience. Originally a Broadway musical for adults (previously presented unsuccessfully in Sydney as such), it is now being offered to the Saturday matinee audience.

The venture is based on the wide appeal of the Peanuts comic strips, which form the foundation of the work, but there are difficulties, some inherent in the nature of the show and some due to the current presentation.

If one were to start from scratch to create a musical specifically for Australian children from the Peanuts comic, the musical would be closer and adapted differently. The form is that of a concert with the elements recognisably shaped by the short comic strip, and while this is not in

itself unsatisfactory, the first half contains too many unconnected and not very amusing short pieces, some of which went over the heads of the young audience. This is partly the fault of the production. A brisker pace and more attention to direction and projection would help.

The other main problem is that of adults impersonating children, particularly children whose "real" facial and characters are so freely expressed on our minds because of their origins. Hugo Marmo had a suitable expression of innocence and the hopefulness (albeit naively, with hopelessness), even if he didn't really look like Charlie Brown, but in general the drama was and shapes of the cast didn't correspond too well to the ideal models.

The great exception was the Snoopy of Nicholas Papademetriou. There was no attempt at dog costume or doggy behaviour. He/she was more authentic than any of the humans. Expressive of face and unashamed, eloquent of gesture, like and energetic of movement, he communicated the querulous Snoopy. He was not a man playing a dog, but a dog playing at being a person (while at the same time retain-

ing his right to be a dog commanding on the human station). Of all the Peanuts characters Snoopy is the chief cult figure for the very young and they were lucky to have him so well portrayed. Mr Red Baron can bring the house down and the show is worth seeing for his performance alone.

In the original comic strip the main continuing of the children is Lucy, bossy, calculating and always right. You love her or you hate her, but you have to accept her. This gives her a well-defined personality which is less difficult to put across than the others, and she was well served by Cecily Stock. To judge from cases of approval from the audience, lots of small girls find it easy to identify with the blundering Lucy and my small daughter went as far as to prefer her even to Snoopy.

Apart from Snoopy's appearance, the best items were some of the group numbers, particularly the quartet of "look, report" in *Peter Rabbit* and the "Glen Club" numbers" afterwards with backtracking. These helped to make the second half much livelier than the first.

The Independent Theatre is hoping that the wide appeal of the Peanuts series will bring in the teenage audience, but I'm not sure whether they attend Saturday matinees at the theatre these days. Whether



What the Butler Saw

"How sad it was to find the play reduced to the level of undies and innuendo . . ."

What the Butler Saw by Joe Orton. Hunter Valley Theatre Company, Hunter Theatre, Newcastle. DIRECTOR, TERENCE CHARLES DUNN. PROPS, D. T. TAYLOR.

DR PRENTICE: Miss Becker Consider: Buckley Dancer: Mrs. Mrs. PRENTICE: Mrs. Bishop, Michael Bishop, Mrs. BECKER: Mrs. Mrs. Mrs. BUTLER: Duncan MACK, Tom COOPER.

Joe Orton met his death aged 34 at the hands of his jealous male lover. The latter then committed suicide. The circumstances made for good press, just as his earlier unrepentant posing of nude photographs in literary books had put his name before the public eye — and just as he a posthumous star is yet to this, and especially, in his macabre death, as with Faustus' last, he stood for beauty and liberalism in sexual relationships. The brief span of his career, panned, four years, saw the gulf not thrown down, in all his work, to the restrictions of offence regulation. But if it challenges, it does so by creating a different order which in the world of plays becomes consistent and acceptable. If any Mr Shrike the pre-adoptive killer and sexual athlete, is subjugated into a temporal message a year by the apparently happy Lordbody and his brother. In *What the Butler Saw* every possible coupling of Homo Sapiens, including incest, is located in a Freudian ambience of libido analysis. In Lord Hall's annual, *Obituary* of stamping the new aspect remains of his mother in favour of protecting the circle of sibling memory, the preoccupation is living, striking at nakedness but exposing the emotional rather than rational ground on which they stand.

Yet human is the paradise of Orton. Despite his historical place in the new-wave theory of anger and manace, he committed the crime of commercial success, added Frank Marzio, with whom he became comparsos, in the same era. There was the compunctions of acting sexual attitudes just one step ahead of the public debate (and several ahead of practice) in the way Benjamin Franklin does now, but then only just released from the censorial grip of the Lord Chamberlain, there was the use of the farce mode, though often turned against itself, and the writing of the plays as a violation, they are crackling and grounded in everyday speech, which had just won the battle against attempts to romanticise the theatre, and the traditional

mode, by red henge of stage setting — all these ingredients made up the right, and often faulty, basis that sustained the West End And grand figures of the English stage like Noel Coward could blemish their approval of the homosexual content so openly stated by their neighbouring charmers.

Despite a recent success of Orton at the Royal Court in London (1975), his name is still far from prevalent amongst the new wave. They had their commercial success, *Look Back in Anger*, *The Caretaker* and so on, but in a sense this was an artistic and incidental to what originally remained the writing. Where they seemed pertinent and spare of plot, Orton, in the later mode, examined his plot with humour and incision; where they explored new techniques, he stuck with the old ways — though undoubtedly he looked them along in the process.

Controlling production was both the making, in the short term, and the breaking, in mid-term respect, of a naturalism. The plays could be produced as Brian Rix, with a touch of Maliboguesian canines, if they reached to total uses of clinical concern, all could be made great with the sense of comic unreality. In the longer term, Orton must be reassessed, and one can sense the beginning of a revolution in, for example, the writings of John Lees. Though his creators have mainly been treated as somewhat tragic pieces for the utilisation of the carriage trade, they can be seen as acts of subversion with an shattering an aspect on the crowd as a grenade tossed into a hand lobby.

For his world is this kitchen-sink than Osborne, his response more sociologically pernicious than Pytter. His wings of sexual libidinosity but losses that beyond a certain point freedom becomes anarchy. If he uses the basic techniques of farce, it is because of his physical ability to go beyond the naturalistic to a domain where disorder reigns and from where order can be fundamentally questioned. Representations of society are cracks (Lord) or fools (*What the Butler Saw*), sexual authority is manipulated (Mrs. Shrike) or impounded (Sir Winston Churchill's growing inebriated in penis size, not intellect). The sacred is dissolved and the devout made the impious.

How, then, is it, to find *What the Butler Saw* reduced to the pre-adolescent level of undies and innuendo, to be back on the

smooth carpet of middle-class appeal rather than trudging the broken glass of the true spirit of his plays. Dancer losses were relegated to the programme notes and then only in reference to the old society/madness syndrome (in case of gripping at sharks' teeth a decade ago when Ling and Co first hacked at the roots of psychiatric practice). The effect of press upon her as "perversing (her) anger" (after John Lees was duly cited, has allowed no stage an stage where characters' nobby character of any such force.

Alan Butler set the tone in the triggering scene of attempted seduction as the psychiatrist Prentice. His gripping fingers behind the secretary's back had the performance two-dimensionally which marred the production as a whole. Dr Mack, the government commissioner come to inspect the asylum, is written in a disturbing situation, perverting the course of enlightenment by jumping to the most perverse conclusion about the inmates he finds. In Ned Bedford's characterisation he became too obviously just a mechanism by which confusion was heaped on confusion rather than embodying the most excesses of Freudian theory. Excess, which, coupled with the bungling attempts by Prentice to control his learning advances, lead to the snapping of the agitated secretary's hair and her contribution an image in the belief that she is a victim of mysterious rage (initially as it turns out almost irony). And when the credits are taken this far, one is forced into a highly ambivalent view of the "comedy".

In traditional farce natural there is the money-grossed off clothes-snapping and the role reversal which it entails. The belfrey, who has pornographic photos of Prentice's wife to blackmail the couple for payment, and a secure job, has his trousers on an attempt to avoid police. Mrs. Prentice has lost her dress back in the hotel and the secretary and policeman has their clothes on the patient of medical examination. Even on this level the production was hard put to bring off the initiating dislocations from which the play derives its life.

Of the cast, Pitt Bishop is the usually urbane and cross-sterile Mr. Prentice ("They'll send you to the pines in a Y-shaped coffin") must take the first right bennies alone. Her accomplished handling of her for the young Baffler, doubts for her husband's sanity, self-dissolution with drink and sexual fears for her own mind when faced by neurotic and injured men, held the pulse of the production and

down one into the multiplying complexities of the plot when much around was muddled and ill-paced. It was only when the almost hopeless entanglements reached their peak — with the policeman wounded and wearing a leprosy-like disease, the ballboy in his underwear and also wounded, the secretary cowed and in a strait-jacket, and the two physicians trying to certify each other fit for part — that the

extent of Qenor's mastery of farce became apparent and covered all before it. In the trap of the consulting-room, now closed off by him, the cockpit resolution is also closed. Again the thematics of the loss which separates re-creating from themes of cruelty is fully apparent.

As the bleeding ballboy clutches on to his new-found mother and the blearily

drooled policeman, clatters through the reef to claim the lost piece of Set Wooden, Romeo advises, "Let us put on our clothes and live the world" — but the wings had been off for too long for this line to have the impact intended. The darker side of Qenor's disturbed and disturbing genius, and thus the treacherous power of his comic vision remained a potential for others to realize.

Rex Cramphorn

Lunchtime Playhouse/Resurgents

Next

Brylcreme and Maggot Pies

"My reaction was . . . one of admiration for the motives of those involved"

Note by Terence McNally, Lunchtime Playhouse, St James Playhouse, Sydney, opened February 28. Director: Peter Williams. With: Cressen Duncan and Gordon Glenwright. Brylcreme and Maggot Pies by Bob Golding. Stages: Paramount Jail, NSW. Duration: Two hours. Ref: Nell Carroll, Soups, Laundry Service, Faded, Jimmy Dwyer, Astoria, Blue Dahlill.

What can you say about theatrical activities which serve a social purpose, reach an audience to whom other kinds of theatre are largely unavailable, and provide practical therapy for those involved? Only that it's good to know that theatre can be of some use. The two short plays of which I write have this in common, perhaps, apart from my reasons to them which, in both cases, was one of admiration for the motives of those involved.

Note, presented by Lunchtime Playhouse at St James Playhouse, was directed by Peter Williams. Note that the AMP Theatres are no longer a main proposition for Q. Theatres and the much-honoured lunch-time activities has moved on to a new plane of activity — nights in Sydney's western suburbs — Lunchtime Playhouse occurs to have taken up where Q left off. An injunction to "help keep up pro-theatre alive in the lunch-hour" is the programme should not confuse us as to the real value of this particular theatrical form, which is the continued entertainment of the elderly ladies who formed the backbone of Q's support for all those years and who have, to judge by the audience with whom I saw *Note*, effectively transferred their allegiance to Lunchtime Playhouse.

As at Q, I found myself touched by the enthusiasm of this neglected and underprivileged audience for the social and cultural occasions provided by a sandwich

or two and a short play. *Note* is a fairly conventional two-hander about the call-up medical examination of a middle-aged theatre manager by a female army doctor. The man feels the experience humiliating and the playwright ends with his monologue of self-reassurance which builds to the point of his assuming the doctor's rôle (she has conveniently left the room). The play's tiny message — of "I am an individual, I am of 'value'" type — and the humour at which it is couched, are fairly familiar. The actors, Cressen Duncan and Gordon Glenwright, look slightly larger than life-size in the little, high, Heaven-hall, prison-cum-achter-space in which luncheon theatre occurs invariably to take place.

When the military band music which had been playing for quite a long time at low level and had built up to a peak for the opening of the curtain, finally stopped for Miss Duncan to begin the play with a sternness "Note", the old lady爆破了 and, "Thank goodness for that!" For an audience to whom band music is a little noisy and Gordon Glenwright's basses unusually raspy, *Note* is a valued social unit and my own reaction to it not a little robust.

This feeling was intensified at Paramount Jail where, with an invited audience, I saw the second performance of *Brylcreme and Maggot Pies*, written by Bob Golding and performed by prisoners. The play was directed by Terry Ralph for Resurgents — a theatre group in Paramount Jail, which originally produced Ann McNeil's work. The play is about getting out of prison at the end of a sentence and coming back for a new one, having failed to adjust to life "outside". The various cycles of being prison and being visited by it for any other life is colourfully presented while the "quarantine" bags of crime and

punishment is conspicuously absent. (Since all the prison plays I have seen here thus far concern, I conclude it is true of prison society in general) In fact, prison is presented as a good alternative life-style to drugs — an alternative which quickly cuts up any other way of living.

The mixture of humour, responsiveness, and continuing pathos in *Brylcreme and Maggot Pies* is familiar in its context as *Note*'s style and content are in its Antwerp case but when the performers are speaking language and containing coding thoughts which are entirely personal and relevant to their real everyday lives, the experience for an audience is clearly on other levels than the simply theatrical. This effect was compounded by attendant circumstances — the play was delayed, we heard, while prison officers refused to allow the two prisoners in the audience with the rather large crowd group. This meant that audience reaction to the topical aspects of some of the dialogue was reduced, changing the tone of the play. I was told by people who had seen the previous performances with a large audience of prisoners, to a marked extent.

I was told that the activities of Resurgents are not viewed favourably by most prison officers, with the exception of the governor. On the way out we were asked if we had copies of a prison magazine called, unusually, *Convict*, which was not allowed outside the prison. In a situation where an actor, after the performance, turned down to buy a woman he had, presumably, seen only through visiting-room glass for some years, the physical merit of the writing and the performance seemed utterly reasonable. I hope the presence of a Channel Nine *Convict* office (now filming a "segment" for snappy home digestion and calling on the actors to repeat "a bit with some elaboration" for the purpose) will be justified by wider general acceptance of the value of such work in such institutions.



Hobson's Choice

"... a plethora of beautiful costumes, a whimsical story, and a steady flow of smile lines . . ."

Hobson's Choice by Harold Brighouse. 8000 QTC. Directed by Peter Cook. Set design: Peter Cook. Lighting: Robert Garside. Music: Vicki Hartman. Stage manager: Maggie Hobson. Cast: William Wilson (Don Crozier); Ruth Barnes (Hester Hobson); Henry Hartman (Albert Hobson); Eddie Garside (Tom Hobson); David Hodge (Tom Hobson); Debbie Wallace (Maggie Hobson); Paul Mayes (William Mansell); Douglas Hodge (Jan Hobson); Russell Pritchard (Aida Foggitt); Gillian Hyde (Fred Mansell); Warren Hendrick (Dr MacFarlane); Meg Cawood.

My critical companion Don Batchelor by chance recently attended one of a number of performances by the Quantitative Theatre Company at the end of which the audience was invited to stay behind and discuss QTC policy with the actors and directors of the play, and in particular the company's self-staff of the playwrights, as independently as Quacquarelli on the current oral theater world is known, and it is already looking to new possibilities such as regional youth theater and perhaps a small experimental company.

The main topic of discussion on this night, however, with the kinds of plays that went into the main 8000 season, and the propositions which the company rather hopefully put was: "Would you like to see a more varied and adventurous programme?" About 30 grassroots members—and a fairly random sample of middle-class society—had stayed to hear that suggestion, and their response, according to Don, was almost uniformly negative. What they valued about the QTC's notion of plays was their predictability, their wholesomeness, a good night out where you knew what you'd get and you could take the kids. Not like the films no mattocks, violence, no four-letter words, though some in the play had said "bastard" and they rather wished it hadn't happened.

One sample doesn't make a survey of course, but I'd raised over Don's audience for several days when I happened to walk into a Saturday matinee of Hobson's Choice. I went in 20 minutes early and watched the audience as they arrived. The first thing that struck me was the extraordinary number of family groups—mostly mothers with eight- to 18-year-old sons and daughters. There was an old-fashioned warmth there; sensibility, remembrance of family genetics. A fleet of matrons enthused

on my left, a squarely set man sat on my right. He told me the QTC, generally, turned in a good show. Slowly I became aware of a bubble of security, a rosy atmosphere, world-like bubble, delicate yet robust. Few of these people would go to any of the kinds of theatre I'd consider important. I wondered darkly if I was in the presence of those to whom the lines from C. S. Lewis would apply:

For ever over his head one day
Ever since the accident I've walked this way
So sick in fear in plaster
Tell me lies

It was, curiously, an audience which wanted to see *Hobson's Choice*, a slight piece of comedy written during the First World War and looking back to the high-Victorian 1880s—an age of efficient middle-class shopkeepers, of relative stability in the world, and of daughters who wished to put buttons on their buttons. They'd come to see gentle comedy, and they were rewarded with a plethora of beautiful costumes, a whimsical story, and a steady flow of smile lines.

Taken seriously, the play would be prettyobjectionable. It pretends to make a few dignified statements and class pretension, but in essence it reveals the basic contempt for the working-class in the society it purports to satirise. Hobson, the aging widower and bootmaker with a living for a part, has three daughters who run the shop. The oldest, Maggie, rebels against her father's tyranny, arranges the trading boat conference, while Mansell, up from the workshop below, and seemingly tells her she's going to marry him. She tells his similarly lower-class girl friend to bugger off and gives Willie no say in the matter. She has decided to educate him, give him sense of ambition, drum him up a bit, use his craft ability to set up an opponent to her father, capture the high-class trade, and rise in the world. Which she does, dragging the hapless Willie up into the middle-class and literally into the marriage bed. Her pyromaniac activities succeed perfectly, and her Willie becomes a cads, a scoundrel, a notorious little pig who successfully hangs out to take over Hobson's shop. And, in a argument over the name of the firm (Mansell and Hobson, not Hobson and Mansell), he seizes his first victory over Maggie. In short, both

hero and heroine would be fairly unpleasant creatures if we took them seriously.

The QTC doesn't, and is transparently not doing so. Their beautifully directed, designed and acted production lifts us from the opening curtains into the world of make-believe, and gently leaves us again, two and a half hours later with our rosy bubble aglow. A slide illustrated the same sentiment as we entered, a picture showing the courage and豪放ness of an English industrial town. A blind shot, without a hint of rich and poor or splendour and squalor. And it sets the tone for the production.

Ruth Wilson simply got on breathily with the business of being Maggie and her good-humoured high-handedness helped us to see that all the other characters were mere toys, objects to be picked around by her and no one should get too concerned about their feelings or their rights. Doug Hodge as Willie was the perfect toy, an unassuming puppus, full of the innocence of uncomprehending innocence. Occasionally, there was an awkward moment where we suddenly wondered if we were supposed to feel sympathy for him, or to believe he might be some vague representation of the English working-class, but by then the moment was gone, in another pleasant if predictable patch of mappery.

Don Crozier's Hobson was a slightly less happy creature, for fairly predictable reasons. The father-daughter clash is the only part of his life in the work, and to sustain the linking, more-bus-style of this production, the conflict of wills had to be considerably muted. One felt that Hobson had no choice from the opening scene, and his resistance was a token one. And among all the minor characters, who made up a sort of subplot, there wasn't one that wasn't predictable to the last sentence.

The QTC has worked hard over the years building audiences by developing an acknowledged house style. And there is now, perhaps, a sort of tacit understanding between company and audience that, whenever the company feels obliged to stretch their wings a little by offering more varied or adventurous fare, the audience will understand and stay away for a while without holding it against them.

And so I came away with Don Batchelor's story, a trivial play, a fine production and the obvious enjoyment of four hundred people to joggle with. Watching them there, with smiling faces, I thought again of the lines:

So sick in fear in plaster
Tell me lies
There Marion Bay bubble floats serenely



Dangerous Corner

"One felt sorry for the poor performers in a silly vehicle . . ."

Dangerous Corner By J.B. Priestley Twelfth Night Theatre, Rockham Director: Alan Whistey Design: Jennifer Carstairs, Fonda Caplin, Rosalind May-Smith, Maud Mackridge, Barbara Stephens, Betty Whishaw, Shirley Vaughan, Oliver Postlewaite, Marissa Burgess, Charles Duer Martin, Ian James, Gordon Whithouse, Tom Berken, Roger Caplin, Dennis May-Smith

"He's like Daddy — still casting well-filled glances back to the Edwardses' night from his comfortable disenchanted wilderness." So says Harry Porter with a look back in anger at J.B. Priestley glancing over his shoulder at a Baking Edwards. Just what sort of *coop d'oeil* is intended, on their part, by Twelfth Night's production of *Dangerous Corner* eludes me:



I saw Priestley on the BBC last year, a good twenty years after Jimmy Porter's harsh judgement, and was fascinated and moved by the great span of his life and the prodigious output. Such programmes as TV give a chattering sense of perspective and an appearance of experience which is in fact too readily derived in front of the immediate and the novel.

The recent past does have its ludicrous side, of course. We in Australia have just had the refreshing squalor of *Bullock's Column* and *ludicrous* *ludicrous*.

There is a different sort of sense in resurrecting a period piece. The present interest in early film footage from the thirties and forties is not all modish nonsense. These reflections of our fathers are often revealing indications of how far and fast things are changed, and make it clear how many of our preconceptions have less than absolute value.

For these reasons it seems churlish to dismiss this Priestley revival merely because it is 45 years old. There are other reasons for my distaste.

The play is a mass of fiddling circumlocutions. What need, indeed, could there be such awful circumlocution? And what of the comedy which found its apogee — or should I say, desertion? How astounding it is that it took so long for a Jimmy Porter to get angry!

Priestley himself, to give him his due, has

little time for the play. "It has never been a masterpiece of mine," he writes, "for it seems to me to be merely an ingenuous box of tricks." Anyhow, he wrote the thing in a single week as a first play, to demonstrate that he could handle the techniques of stage composition — and a dozen rolling and technical paces he produced.

Certainly no characters are created, just a set of off-dinner chummers in a drawing-room. So tedious in reality has it been at the Caplin's, that the ladies, having retired (in a different chamber from the men, that is), are troubling themselves with the last half (poorly!) of a play on the worries about the dangers of half-truths and lies. When the gentlemen join them, and Fonda Caplin is offering around an apparently innocent cigarette box, the amazingly like the lid on Portion's lid of "ingenuity, master, and intrigue":

Holding unopened one cigarette, untruth about the circumstances surrounding the demise of Martin Caplin (glancing but briefly younger brother of our host), the guests begin reluctantly strumming away the lies that have been protecting them from some steadily and damaging truths involving theft, infidelity, murder, sex, and worse, drug-taking and perversion.

As one observer says, in a perfectly plausible insight: "Telling the truth is about as dangerous as skidding round corners at night."

A quaint code scene introduces the idea of a split existence, some given moment from which the "two alternative series of events might be set in motion". This is the first, essay in a well-known set of *Time* plays which Priestley wrote as illustrations of J. W. Dunne's theories about levels of time. He develops the theme more interestingly in *Time and the Conways*, creating better characters, in a well-observed provincial setting which might have proved more worthy of Twelfth Night's affection.

In other words, in *Dangerous Corner* the company makes no mistake, there are plays which more fully represent how life is lived, than that stabilizing middle-class society faced together in unlikely marriages where the humanistic thing is to play the game, keep up appearances, and pass the punch and cigars, cheap, there are plays which do it better. If it is entertainment that is to bring laughter, why go past a sketch farce like *Where we are*? Moreover, much at least allows some opportunity for acting!

As it was, one felt sorry for the poor performers in a silly vehicle which required them to pose stiffly about, slapping themselves over the furniture or around the props, deflating them bit by bit, then retiring to a neutral corner weakly staring into space or leading absently through some convoluted meanderings. This deflating effect Tom Berken (Gordon Whithouse) found it impossible to avert. He is much addicted to revealing snippets in a disguised intention to give one hundred per cent at all times. For his part, Jeremy May-Smith (Robert Caplin) spent much of the evening with hooded eyes and bowed head which suggested embarrassment at being present at all. James (Charles Stanton) was efficient as usual, and quite amazingly quelled occasional fits of derision and a surprisingly young audience found it impossible to contain. Marissa Burgess presented a tact and decent Oliver Postlewaite in a constricted performance, whatever that young Shirley Vaughan (Betty Whishaw), admittedly with less material at her disposal, only just managed to face-like the part. In no way did the actress part of Maud Mackridge (whose name is quite ridiculous, I assure you), Barbara Stephens was less than her commanding best. Rosalind May-Smith, as Fonda Caplin, was relaxed and confident, playing with an open smile than others, with other things to do, did not dare to chance.

As director, Alan Whistey, marshalled his actors well enough, there was little interpretation demanded, so the main task was to capture the period flavor. Jennifer Carstairs's set was an expensiveistic wall of tightly strung ropes in contrived and intricate patterns — a hyper-attainment for such a play, but preferable to a poorly executed static realism. The furniture was neutral enough not to distract, but it contributed nothing either. There was an agonized economy all round: the women's costumes being light-weight and needing to be raised low constantly by liberal applications of glaze, and the men's dinner suits being an assortied collection from any but the right period or style.

"None of this was really offensive, except that it successfully removed yet another possible reason for doing the play at all — namely as a foolish picture of the time. Which brings me back to my beginning boulders.

Why would Twelfth Night, from all reports locked in a struggle for survival, choose *Dangerous Corner* from over two thousand years of Western dramatic achievement?

The Department

"It says much for the pace of the dialogue and the strength of performances . . . that our interest is never tempted to flag"

The Department by David Williamson. W.A. National Theatre Company, Perth, Perth. Directed by March Director Anne French. Design, Anne French. Lighting, Geoff Gibbons. Sound, Linda Wright. Poetry, Geoff Gibbons. Set, Leah Taylor. Stage, Dennis Miller. Robby, Ian Scott. Mrs. Ian Scott, Linda. The Boss, Al Neville. Gobby, Owen Penn King. Myra, Linda Skinner.

Nearly two years later David Williamson's *The Department* has reached the Perth Playhouse. In fact, the delay is of no consequence. Even in 1975 it was already "permed", set back in a golden age (1967) when tertiary education still saw the sky as the limit, and empire-building was a game in which you could make enormous numbers an ascension. Feed at the finishing lodges, who don't kick meaty.

The later perspective shows up the play's more complex layering. It's not merely about the manipulations and group dynamics within one particular organisation, or in one particular time, but about the whole tertiary system, and beyond that, about the running of organisations in general. True, the analogous shock of recognition is the education business at the most powerful, but even public servants have been able to apply the patterns to sectors.

The Department occupies a special place among Williamson's works. By returning himself to the format of the staff meeting, he has imposed rigid limitations on himself, which force him into deeper explorations and more subtle meanings of his material. In the larger framework of his other plays, as they the emotional patterns of family life exploding onto domestic violence, or the sexual comedy of the party situation, the serious comment is located somewhere beneath the avalanche of local colour and easy laughs. Here the laughter is used to sharpen the more cold comment on the specific mass clustering around the theme of management, through incompetence, cynicism and self-seeking. The tragic ingredient of unwise Australia is dispensed with, and any sense of condescension now results from an acute observation of recognisable patterns in a wider culture.

There is, of course, something off-putting about the moulds of the piece. We are exposed to sympathy with Robby, the head of the department, who bullies and exploits his staff (and he's not above telling

tales about one to the other, either), who is willing to sell the present lot of students down the river for the benefit of some future generation, or is it mere self-aggrandisement? Who can't manage a calculation which one in the panel will have been sitting on for 10 months, and who has long since ceased to relate in human terms to anyone because of his all-consuming "love" for his department?

A more appropriate response is probably not sympathy at all, but merely a dispassionate recording of the facts presented — that the kind of survival is the only possible mode of existence in the world shown in the play. When, at the end of it all, Robby stands alone, looking for all the world like a captain on the bridge, it is clear that he has sailed his crew through a stormy passage and will cope again in the future.

But the play is not these, despite the oblique dynamics lurking around the edges. The kind of heat that is being generated, and the equilibrium established in家庭的, hierarchical, and quite academic. The friction is seen in terms of compartmentalisation, and area the basic symbolism of the study foundations is based in human error. Thus, the possible collapse of the building because of the faulty installation of the tank is duplicated in moral terms by the discovery that the college who originally founded on crooked money. Myra survives on both levels.

The stresses brought out by the staff meeting repeat the pattern. The structure may buckle a little, but it holds up.

Apart from Robby and the female minister from the Humanities, Myra, the characters are just a shade removed from stereotypes. Their importance is secondary and demonstrates an attitude, not in-depth analysis. Their part among them is that, the common-sense wit, here played by Dennis Miller with a crisp sense of fun. He has the most droling Williamson has and never misses Leslie Wright, as the ministerial spin, Gordon, who is as responsive of persons, and contributes sharp remarks about those who can do, and those who can't, spot on, and clearly echoes the sentiments of large parts of the audience (any audience). Peter, the "thoroughbred among the packhorses" and John, the middle-of-the-road man (Ian Penhale and Ian Scott) present problems in

content, the one having to be put in his place, the other mollified and reassured in his fading station. The other set of contrasts is Robby (Geoff Gibbs plays him as a young schoolboy), whom Robby himself in his career outgrows, and Al (Al Neville Gaffney), where the system has turned him an invisible negotiator. Between them they demonstrate just of the things a bad system can do to its members, and also what kinds of people, added together, create a bad system.

In the character of Robby, head of the department, something more personal is explored. He has gained a department but lost his soul. In the Melbourne production the emphasis had been on exhausted disillusionment. Alan Cudell in the Playhouse version plays him with more vigour, nervous energy, suggesting a man aware of his study position, aggressively or the defences and play-acting for all he's worth. The closer he allows himself to get to uncertainty in the moments alone with Myra, but at the same time he puts up a barrier of restraint against the possibility of alternative actions.

Carole Skinner brings with her the experience of having played Myra in the original production, and comes as any confidence and robust good sense that is repeat the character but also the result of complete familiarity with the role. Her cool unassumingly illustrates the sense of strike, while her passionate commitment to the interests of the students nicely shows up the lack of genuine concern among her colleagues.

Physically, it must be one of the most uncomfortable productions the Playhouse has seen. Although the dialogue suggests the laboratory environment, Anne French's set gives pride of place to a monstrous great piece of machinery which crowds the actors as a narrow strip downstage, on to ladders on either side, and they hauled head together in a small area suggesting an overextended rational space perched as top of the machine. This ensures that the underlying motivation for enlarging the department by far means or foul so that it will qualify for better accommodations, is constantly in view. For the players it means little freedom of movement once they are dislodged and locked into their places, for the audience a limited physical space (unless they sit in the balcony seats) in focusing upwards for the major part of the action. It says much for the pace of the dialogue and the strength of performances, both individually and in the group, that our interest is never tempted to flag.

At War with Shaw

"Director John Milson's deft touch . . . seems surer with every production"

At War with Shaw. Two one-act plays by G. B. Shaw. Hole-in-the-Wall Theatre, Perth Opened March 16. Director, John Milson. Designers: Graham Sharpe.

The Man of Destiny. Napoleon Bonaparte. Robert Van Mastrickberg. Giuseppe Grasso. Rod Williams. Soli Lonsdale. Maria Jones. The Strange Lady. Tracy Youlster. O'Flaherty F.C. Dennis O'Flaherty. V.C. Alan Fletcher. Giuseppe. Sir Francis Mangles. Ruth. Rod Williams. Mrs. O'Flaherty. Margaret Ford. Terence O'Neill. Tracy Youlster.

Based on the popularity as a post-dinner "refresher", the new Hole-in-the-Wall double bill of one acters lived up to its advertising. Director John Milson's deft touch (which seems to me surer with every production) has translated two slight (though good) examples of Shaw's comedy into a light, bright and sparkling evening's entertainment. Perhaps the beauty of the two plays, *The Man of Destiny* and *O'Flaherty F.C.* works in Milson's favour, for because of it we are mercifully spared the heavy and sometimes sickly disguised authorial harangue which so frequently mar Shaw's plays. Shaw himself considered the most substantial

The ratio involving the two-play presentation, *At War with Shaw* might suggest a dramatic emphasis on the comic links common to both plays. In fact, Milson does not force the one-war link in his production of the new play, *The Man of Destiny* (1898) depicts an imagined incident in the life of the young Napoleon just after his victory in the Battle of Lodi, and while Shaw takes an occasional opportunity to mock the pretensions of the winner, he is much more concerned with depicting (through his fanciful tale of the Strange Lady who steals the general's dispatches) something of the nature of pretension.

Right through the 1890s and early 1900s G.B.S. had something of a bias in his蔑视ed Irish because (which has been magnified by Metcalfe's writings on the *Sapper*) and many of his plays of that period focus on characters whose pretences are a function of their "originality", a quality Shaw never really defines, but which seems to consist of a fusion of racism, intellectual snobbery and a determined opposition to merely conventional means of achieving necessary ends. In *The Man of Destiny* Napoleon is such an "original", but he is presented of a time when he stands on the edge of his destiny and is consequently more than usually wary about the placement of his own step.



In the Hole production, Napoleon is played by Robert Van Mastrickberg. In keeping with the farcicality of the plot, and the almost unrehearsed cut-and-thrust of the debate between the Corsican Conqueror and the Strange Lady, Milson opted for a minimalist style of performance. In the context of that style, Van Mastrickberg created a Napoleon whose irony and forthrightness were both beautifully contained by a certain frostiness of manner. As the Strange Lady, Tracy Youlster was only slightly less effective, there being moments when grace of movement and gesture were lost in straining too hard for just the right composition of body, berth and head.

The supporting players, Rod Williams and Maria Jones, as the Lookerupper Giuseppe and a widow gentleman officer respectively, do well with their parts. Rod Williams' Giuseppe, I thought a particularly fine piece of comic acting, until the performance was marred at the end by the inappropriateness of an ungraciously fatal over-reaction to the Strange Lady's suggestion that when he has been working Shaw's Giuseppe is pretty much a stock character, but he has been given a share of intelligence and a certain peasant dignity, qualities well portrayed by Williams, but contradicted by his excesses of superstitious fear in the final moments of the play. He played up, for the broad effect, what should have been played down, for the more subtle and living one.

The second offering, *O'Flaherty F.C.*, is an even slighter piece than *The Man of Destiny* (written in 1915, and successfully mounted at a Revolving Pamphlet, it depicts

an incident in the life of Private Dennis O'Flaherty, V.C., a simple Irish lad not thinking by his experience in the trenches Shaw uses the play to attack British jingoism (represented, in its crass form, by Sir Francis Mangles, the general O'Flaherty is accompanying on a recruiting tour, and on whose Irish accent his childhood has been spent) and to satirise Anglo-Irish antagonism, represented through O'Flaherty's belligerent mother.

O'Flaherty was played by a relative newcomer to the Perth stage, former undergraduate amateur, Alan Fletcher. He is a young actor of great promise and was convincing in his slightly belligerent, slightly bawdy young soldier so out of warfare, Irish mothers and English generals that he consummated becoming a French *farceur*. Fletcher's control of the notoriously difficult Irish accent was only just short of impeccable, and a couple more nights in the role should see him expert enough to Rod St Patten himself!

An O'Flaherty's mother, Margaret Ford has a plain comic part, and she did it manfully just to be sure. By turns obsequious, aggressive, domineering and affectionately good-natured she is a delightfully comic image of an old woman, and Margaret Ford made the most of her.

For *O'Flaherty F.C.* Rod Williams complemented his comic star-keeper of earlier in the evening with a nicely handled Sir Francis Mangles, upper-class military man, crusty but essentially good-natured, cracked out in the reveals and making footnotes obligatory for all generals referred to country estates. Tracy Youlster also makes a brief reappearance, this time as Tessie, part-spared and former O'Flaherty sweetheart. There's a little enough for her to do, but what there is is done well, in keeping with the high standard of performance over all.

Again, then the unapex of performances in both plays, they are also a delight for the eyes. Costumes are suitably (as per intended) good and the set, a slightly raised platform backed by two whitewashed board walls set at an angle is effective both when dressed as an inn room (*The Man of Destiny*) or a garden courtyard (*O'Flaherty F.C.*). Presented in a spirit of breezy fun, and with a delightful lack of pretension, these two plays do make an effective refresher for theatre patrons over-dosed on Faroese drama. They have all the sparkle and effervescence of a glass of Asti-spumanti, but, fortuitously, no trace of the diarrhoeic after-effects. The Hole management has every right to hope for a successful five-week season.



Same Time Next Year

"Blundell is . . . at times so emotionally ill-at-ease that both love and accent slip . . ."



Same Time Next Year by Bernard Slade
Premiere Production, Her Majesty's Theatre
Adelaide Opened 13 March Director, Gordon Hunt
George, Crisette Blundell, Dora, Nancy Hayes

Crisette Blundell, as the adolescent widow in the new Bernard Slade comedy *Same Time Next Year*, passionately declares to his paternal partner that "Women are more pragmatic than men they adjust to situations better."

The audience was amazed. Her lover Dora, played by Nancy Hayes, responded with a gleaming look of admiration.

And laughter in tandem with accents reverberated through a near-empty Her Majesty's, in Adelaide.

But Blundell's seemingly caustic remark, a provocative one on the capital of sexual democracy, offered an early clue to Slade's *revision of sex*. Dora and George are both middle journals of American middle class. And they make an extra-marital commitment to each other in the consumer style. Their various affairs at a cross of love by attachment.

For one weekend each year for 24 years, Dora and George meet in a guest cottage in a North California country inn. They regulate their carnal, tax and responsibilities

by the comforting thought that all's justified because "the Russians have the bomb . . . we would be dead tomorrow."

George comes out from New Jersey yearly to make a friend's books. He has a perfect wife Dora, an Australian-born Italian Catholic, leaves behind Harry and the children in Bakersfield for her annual retreat. She has no job but simply plays tennis and feels satisfied, not to any sexual, uplift in the arms and companionship of the amorous co-tenant.

From the outset Dora, more than George, makes flexible her rigid principles in order to cope and "adjust to situations better." George suffers pangs of conscience. He answers a phone call from his pre-school daughter in a voice "full floors with passion." Oh he worries aloud about the "looks of bewilder in the eyes of the children."

Dora adjusts. And that ability to adjust sets her mission as an educational, developing in stages from pregnant high-school drop-out, pregnant high-school graduate in her 20s, sexual adventuress, middle-aged college keepsie, indolent, financial whiz and finally to gracious, but always adorably, grandmother.

Nancy Hayes handles the transition expertly. But her pace and spark, unfortunately, are often impaired by Blundell's difficult performance. He is clearly uncomfortable in the role, and at times so emotionally ill-at-ease that both love and accent slip.

Hard words perhaps, since he is a relatively nimble actress in the show, but that's how I see it.

And so where Miss Hayes is equipped with a dignity that leads to more than a superficial understanding and interpretation of her character, Blundell appears somewhat handicapped. Age in theatre must be more than grey flowing and painted wrinkles.

Gordon Hunt's direction was, as many, direct, perhaps too direct, for it was as if the puppet-master had cut the strings, only to allow his marionette to flop down in twinges.

The set was likewise comprising a kind of cruddy bachelor pad rather than the gaud house of a country inn, and the taped rooms and music used to provide atmosphere between scenes left much to be desired.

In short, *Same Time Next Year*, was not a satisfactory night of slick comedy and top performance. Rather, it seems more appropriate to say that, as a pantomime production, it isn't one consistently hoping someone would pull the curtain's rip cord.



Macbeth

"... setting itself tasks which have provoked challenging and direct responses"

Written by Eugene Ionesco, Ugo Rondinone
Adelaide opened 16 March. Director, Martin Charnier. Designers: Jan van Heege, 

Cast: Geoff Crookshank, Michael Potts, Steven Rizzo, Rob Brookman, Jennifer Sellar, Jim Morris, Odile, John Webb, Leah Monks, Sue Miller, Duncan, Eric Mathews, Lady in waiting, Steven Thomas, Warren James, Bigot, Soldiers, Nick Cuthbert, David Rollins, Dennis, Tamara Blaik, Denis Langton from Mathews.

Ambrose Bierce's cynical view of ambition as "an overwhelming desire to be raised by others while living and made ridiculous by friends when dead" would no doubt mesh with the approach of an Ionesco who purports to show in his *Macbeth* the paradoxes and delirium of man's attempts to overturn destiny. The *Macbeth* is a set of reactions, a lot of attributes, most of them — twisted, repulsive, silly — have their source in Shakespeare's hero. But here they are hung on the character-like decorations, or lettered postcards, each of which can be waved at the appropriate time. The obvious and easy justification of the approach to character and plot is the catch-phrase "observed" as all human behaviour is seen by Ionesco as absurd, that very allows him to include in his cast a female in tuxedo, clutching a butterfly net, a Dame of Goshen who has Goshen as a neurotic's dummy, and a Lady Duncan who doubles as Macbeth's spouse and a witch. It's all fairly ingenious and dicing, but it would be wrong to mistake these qualities either for relevance or for an honest examination of the questions the play pretends to raise.

These reservations aside, the Adelaide University Theatre Guild and its director are to be commended for taking on the play. A touch of naivety and a healthy scepticism are the Adelaide theatrical scene at present, and it is encouraging to see such a group setting itself tasks which, although not solved altogether by the production, have provoked challenging and direct responses from cast and director.

Not the least of the production's merits is the lightness, expressiveness, set design and use of lighting. It's a relief to see confirmed a conviction that the stage does not need to be as cluttered with furniture and props that it looks either like an antique dealer's hoard or a hasty, mid-converted apartment unit. The

performance area remains bare but for a screen, the occasional use of a three and a curtain with steps, and a lofty Italian square built of four perpendicular columns and cross-beams which do not meet. Set on the square, this effective stage is used imaginatively in the second act, although at times there was just the suggestion that the machinery was being set in motion for its own sake. And the simple idea of an enormous length of floating grey cloth, sweeping from the front of the stage down in pointed peaks towards Macbeth's castle was again an effective conclusion of the tone — as appropriate to the theatre as it is to architecture — that "less is more". In conjunction with the spatial and suggestive lighting, the set tended, however, to overshadow both performers and play.

As an exception, Sue Miller's Lady Duncan/Fair Witch was full of energy and presence, vocally strong and physically displaying attributes that clearly provoked a response in *Macbeth*; she provided the focal point for the production. And although many of the other characters tended in their dubiousness to neutralise the characters, the gold robes she displayed on appropriate occasions were worn with both style and a conviction that this *Macbeth* would find more to offer than is usually available in traditional productions of *Macbeth*. In that respect, Ionesco's re-viewing of the character in both time and space and the double perspective was well-rehearsed in Ms Miller's performance.

In the Banco-Macbeth double act, Peter Duncan and Rob Brookman also had some good moments, apart from some misinterpretations with their lines. But they, like everyone in the production, clearly upheld the value of clear diction and the director has certainly put his priorities right on this score. Elsewhere there were some problems: the first act last presentation and became somewhat muddled, and worse of the repeated exchanges between Banco and Macbeth could have been both more comic and more chilling than they proved. But the second act, which takes much of the external action of Shakespeare's text at a break, again was cleverly managed and full of humour. On that evidence, Martin Charnier has much to offer and has progress, together with that of the Theatre Guild, deserve to be watched with more than passing interest.

KILLARA COFFEE THEATRE

480 Pacific Highway, Killara, N.S.W.

Proudly presents

HALLO LONDON

A full colour 10 minute film *Anniversary of the Queen's Silver Jubilee*

Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. and Sat. 8 p.m.
Sat. at 10.30 p.m.

Reservations (02) 488 7852

Enclosed Theatre Party Concessions available

200 PERSONALS
COLLEGE OF DANCE
(Dust... 1975)

Classes and Private Tuition —
Ballroom, Latin American,
Old Time, Social, Theatrical,
Modern, Jazz and Classical.

Ballet (M.A.D.) Examinations
in all forms and Gold and
Silver Medal tests, if required.

198 Liverpool Road,
Berowra, N.S.W. 2124

Phone 28-6362 (A.E. 428-1594)

MELIAN

488 9166
2 Marcus St., Willers

THEATRE AND RESTAURANT

Anne Hardy, Max Meldrum and
Peter Adams

in
THE THRILLER

DOUBLE EDGE

by Leslie Dutton and Peter Adams
TUESDAY TO SATURDAY 8.15, SUNDAY
4.30 until May 31
OPENING THURSDAY MAY 26 at 8.15 p.m.
THE HAPPY HUNTER
by George Paynter



THE MEDAL OF HONOR BAG

BY LEONIE STONE

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE HARDY

AND PETER ADAMS

ALISON MARY FAGAN

BY ROBIN HALLIWELL

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE HARDY

ENSEMBLE



Ravages

"John Wood now knows who he is laughing at and when to stop laughing."

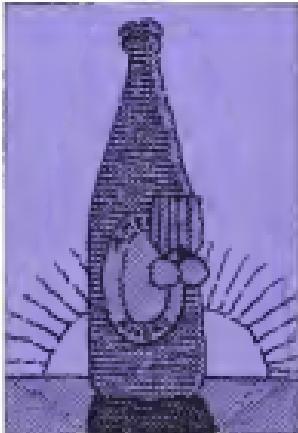
Ravages Two new plays written and directed by John Wood. La Mama, Theatre Melbourne. Opened 7 March 1977. Music: David Nelson. Set: Sue Jones. Cost: Tim Robertson. Lighting: Peter Cummins. Design: Jo Wright. River Kerr. John Surman. Jean Liddy Clark.

In 1974 a Melbourne Theatre Company actor, John Wood, wrote a one-act play *Myself* which opened on the *Fire Stage* which was produced by the Australian Performing Group in the From Theatre of the Prism Factory Melbourne. It was a laboured comic piece, spared from complete unsuccess by some shabby observed impersonations. Max Gillies (Gangster), Les Marston (Cleo) and Evelyn Kratz (Marilyn).

The two new plays in the *Ravages* season — *Dropout* (or *Howl Over Fred*) — are different and more substantial pieces. While *oakum* is raised by the circumstances and convenience that characterised *On Fire Stage*, *Howl Over Fred* is the more original and refined of the two. Both pieces are confidently naturalistic and in command of their language and rhythm. Wood is still writing comedy, but now he knows who he's laughing at and when to stop-laughing.

Dropout is a macabre short encounter which takes place on an outer suburban street step (1981), despite thoroughly convincing performances by the three actors involved it doesn't quite come off. As an understandably distressed, deserted young mother, Liddy Clark was substantially old-before-hair-time beneath a black comic facade. In the play she is forced into confronting her past as the distinctly related couple who drop in on her. As the besieged first husband, River Kerr gave another of his partly-lucky observed performances, and as his right-angled but voracious wife, Sue Jones was totally prepossessing and nasty. The play opens with a rudely played scene of engaged snarling, and the tension builds in a succession of ordinary magnificently related by the young woman however, towards the end the tension falls away and the drama turns predictable and nasty.

Howl Over Fred brings two fine actors, Peter Cummins and Tim Robertson, with Sue Jones in a tight, tautened examination of the unsuccesses of the Australian male Sex in the adjoining kitchen and bedrooms



of another suburban house on Anzac Day, the play begins at the cracking over breakfast and ends less than evening when the husband (Tim Robertson) a disengaged Aussie hero, returns home, boozed and bawling from battles to find his wife (Sue Jones) is bed with his wartime mate, Freddy (Peter Cummins), the war whose life he had saved. What is so dramatically impressive is the way in which the four scenes of the play change and build the tension by contrasting moods, which range from the tawdy, wisecracking opening through tender, funny love-scene and the agonisedly violent finale.

Throughout, the characterisation is complex enough to sustain the previously established moods while simultaneously creating a new one. Tim Robertson plays Cleo, the aggressive thotchic whiney old barman/capogiro in the pub. Nellie (Sue Jones) is his ignored but still trying wife, who attempts to revive their flagging relationship. He responds with sarcasm and grunts, but she has some resilience left and can give as good as she gets, and a wholesomely swinging sexual encounter which they valuing superbly placed amidst an each other. His purpose is castrating — she wants him to see what he is doing to her and their relationship — whereas he merely cherishes her as the sagging bitch, and withdraws to the mord and the pub. There is no way he will allow himself

to be drawn into the affective world of intergenerational relationships, for alone begins to resolve the ongoing dilemma of his relationship to her. Their argument does not seem particularly plausible, and, although he says he won't come back, it is obvious he will and that when he does she will forgive, though not forget entirely. Throughout the argument, she has made passing references to Freddy, the laughs underlie the new generation of Cleo's glorious war record. Freddy the disengaged and profane alcoholic who regularly turns up every Anzac Day to drown in Nellie's eyes in the hero's last and call her "the reason".

Peter Cummins as Freddy, had the most difficult role. Freddy has to live up to expectations and create new ones. He has to have traces of the former edges of Nellie's play while fast becoming the alternative to Cleo, and the object of her newly awakened desire.

While Cleo had moments a certain brash charm and a honey-pot air when, Freddy's appeal is usually defined in negative terms, as unlike Cleo, he is not a war hero, not appetitive and bawling with bravado, not insensitive and indifferent to Nellie's tenderness and sexuality. He is also, significantly, no longer an alcoholic and not Nellie's husband. This negation of Cleo must be transformed into an actual man when Nellie wants to know — not her husband's man, her own lover. Peter Cummins maintained the tension between what Freddy had formerly been to Nellie and what he was to her now, and created a sympathetic character. Even when they are in fact, Freddy is still calling her "mate", and profanely and generously apologising for the inconvenience, just as on previous Anzac Days he would say when asked to stay for dinner, "Thanks, mate, I wouldn't want to put you out." The scenes between Freddy and Nellie as they tentatively explore the boundaries of their sexual attraction were deeply understood by the writer/director and the actors, and remarkably touching. They had no element of wily self-osity which prevented them from becomingatory and prurient.

The play ends in violent confrontation when Cleo finally comes home. It takes a while for her to realise what has happened and he sees into Nellie, who has finally wrapped a dressing-gown around her, why she isn't wearing a nightie. But when the realisation hits, her thoughts processes are swift and predictable. They fight when Cleo attacks Nellie, and Freddy has his revenge on the man whom he always cared for saving him.

The School for Scandal

"The play . . . desperately requires startling and muscular treatment, which it didn't receive"

The School for Scandal by R. B. Sheridan
Athenaeum Theatre, Melbourne, opened 17 March. Director: Alan Lester; designer: Tony Papp; choreography: Jim McRae; lighting: Lady Scandal. Sandy Lane: Suzy; Robert Mingo: Mervyn; Peter Dunn: Joseph; Sue Cox: Constance; Marisa: Sally; Debbie: Mrs. Condom: Jenny; Inez: Christine; Edward Hepple: Sir Benjamin Backbite; Gary Dessa: Mr. Peter; Tasha: Susan; Children: Roslyn, David; impersonator: Lucy; Tamara: Natalie; Miss Murchison: Lucy; Roslyn: Sir Oliver; Scandal: Linda; Tasha: Suzy; Peter Myles: Tom; Karen Blodget: Charlotte; David Deneen: Captain Berry Hill; Mervyn: Ray; Suzy: Linda; Constance: a blonde; Lucy: Barbara; Gary Dessa: Peter Dunn; Sue Cox: Debbie.

March is now the captain's turned out to be in a race of celebrating openings for Australian theatre-goers — Queensland Theatre Company with *Robbers' Chorus*, Tasmania Theatre Company with *The Sound of Music*, South Australian Theatre Company with *The School for Scandal*, and *The School for Scandal* yet again by the Melbourne Theatre Company to mark their occupancy of the Athenaeum Theatre, which has had its stage modernised and re-equipped. Refreshing as ever, rather than magnificently inane, seems to be the name of the game for March this year.

There are hard times, or unpredictable times, for local, indigenous drama. Never has the Englishness of Australian theatre been more evident. Nearly every major company is controlled by an Englishman (imagine that in cricket or rugby). The English tyranny of camp theatricalism is still pervasive, a kind of general yet ridiculous imperialism Sydney, that creature and incarnation of fusty fashion, revels, like the Warsaw Republic in its way, in the likes of transvestite burlesques and beach boppety, a sad parasite for the Richard and Jeannine.

The Australian Performing Group with its numberless hocus-pocus entertainment *The Hobs Family Show*, finds it difficult to win audiences because of its reluctance to So topical and relevant is the situation at the moment, that new writers with a new angle or even perspective are immediately elevated to the status of a cult. The movement of the seventies has either depressingly failed to make qualitative or profound breakthroughs or conventional or

inhabited theatre in the country. The status quo persists, implacably ingesting and assimilating anything that is fresh and challenging, or vice versa and painlessly

washing it off.

It was with these gloomy thoughts that I sat through, pain enjoyed, pain deplored, a competent and standard production of Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* at the new Athenaeum. After an hour into the first half, my head and soul were very sore. The evening exemplified a lot of the things I had been rambling about.

Of course *The School for Scandal* is a study in surface affectation, a comedy of



L to R: Dunn, Lester, Hepple.

false measure, an expose of hypocrisy and self-serving. It banishes conventional literary talents with easy material. The play is so well known, so well tried, it dangerously requires standing and muscular treatment, which it didn't receive.

For all its intricate twists and cynical wit, *The School for Scandal* ultimately antagonises itself into the good and the ridiculous, the latter predominant, the former reduced. That simple division cut out for some more qualifications: an element of gaiety in the happy ending, some modification of the antisocial, a swirl of the macabre in the play itself.

Ray Lawler's production is somewhat stock. Few of these evil yet authentically comic possibilities are exploited — we are tempted to believe that the characters will have learned by their experience. The sense of an ethical journey was certainly there. What was lacking for me was a final comic edge — a hint of some unreliability in human behaviour to mitigate the all the bad.

Nevertheless, the production presented some good performances, particularly that of Leonid Leonov as Mrs Cardew — stylish and comprehensively alert to all the ramifications of character already around him. Brian Myles successfully avoided all the pitfalls of anti-sentiment in his Mingo, and indeed created a more agreeable individual from the bad boy. Some Children once again showed what a political clod you forever be a wretched realization of Sir Peter Teale.

David Birrell also shone within the limits of the interpretation of Charles Surface — he seemed untroubled by the vagaries of degenerate conduct. The Melbourne Theatre Company has always been in difficulty with violence and more popular on stage — to aid the legal fight in the recent production of *The Bell and the Tortoise* which at Chatswood and his friends in this play. We had the usual firework stunts (nothing above, a bawdy song, and naturally the wanton type flashing were full here, some bacon burnt, and dancing, you guessed it, as usual).

Frank Thring, who is not as much as he used to be, appeared irresistibly as Longville in the successful English language flora the last Sir Oliver Savile. Somewhat he contrived to look like some accidens Puritan from the Mayflower, or have descended from a shabby production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. His performance, a rather exhausted and lacklustre one in opening night, failed to earn much respect on the audience the type of audience who over the years have extended to Mr Thring more affectionate indulgence than the Page could ever supply.

The rest of the largish cast, either copied without imagination and flat, or were plain inadequate. The members of the School for Scandal itself, much more than a mere menagerie of peasants, were never enough, sufficiently so manipulative enough for me. I liked the affection and flippancy of some horrific little mounds. I

didn't really see them, there was no real threat to the decent and honourable in the play.

Smiley's gift of a role to a physical actor, was given a stiff and fairly predictable reading by Robert Hewitt. Sally Cattell's Mingo was the submissiveness stereotype of the winsome beauty. Similarly, Natalie Bass's Lady Teazle, who also displayed an inconstancy of event or opening night, something that will surely be ironed out as the run proceeds.

The set seemed cramped and shabby, overpowered in addition by embracing huge walls of wood paneling. The costumes, as usual, were expensive and the very all very fashionplate. The theatre itself would be correspondingly improved by over thing a hand. Considering the MTC will do pretty well with the *Aladdin* it has a superb central location, emanates an old-world atmosphere, and will provide the public with a pleasurable fare, plays of traditional worthiness, the kind that regularly appear on a MTC syllabus and often alongside teenagers from the theatre in condition their inoffensive good taste.

It is a two hundred year since *The School for Scandal* was first performed in London. At the risk of sounding overblown I must, I would I could, can I was not performed in this country for the next two hundred years, unless of course some inconsiderable dog of a director, with a ruffed coat, came along and gawped at his winds, sporting all the possible combinations of the past.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE NEW SERVICE



"INSTANT CHARGE"

The Sydney Opera House Box Office now offers American Express, Bankcard and second American credit cards.

These cards can be used to purchase tickets by telephone, post or over the counter at the Opera House Box Office.

Box office hours generally open 10am - 5pm, no earlier than 10 minutes of a show. Over the counter bookings and the "INSTANT CHARGE" telephone bookings open three weeks in advance.

For further information about the new credit card service, phone (02) 20084666, fax (02) 20084667, for "INSTANT CHARGE".



THEATRE MUSIC

We offer Australia's widest selection of specialist music. No pop music, no dreary 'middle of the road' and no ABBA. We do offer the best in Broadway, selected Classical, Political, Folk Arts, Early Jazz, Blues, New Songwriters, Comedy and Ethnic music. Our "boxed" sets offer plays, choice music, odd sounds, what's grunting and anything else you might need for theatre production. Our records pop up at the best theatres in Australia.

Mail Order. Send a S.A.E. for our 40 page catalogue.



FOCK WAYS

58 Oxford St., Paddington, 2021

Issue Victoria Bilingual Pg 20 2000

Editorial: 02 25166811

The Fall Guy

"Linda Aronson is . . . an accomplished playwright, and I look forward to seeing more of her work"

The Fall Guy by Linda Aronson. Melbourne Theatre Company. Russell Street Theatre, Melbourne. Opened 29 March. Director and designer, Mark Radeg. Choreography, Joe Pichler. Jack Purcell: Ross Gordon. Terence Donavan: Hughie Mervyn Bratke. Narr: Stephen Oldfield.

A critic and of Linda Aronson's play *The Fall Guy* that there was "a good play trying to get out". Another said of Jack Hibberd's *A Taste of Melba* that it would have been better if it had been a one-act play like his *Len Deary*. Hibberd, accused of writing sprawling, unrefined plays, *Wellworn* is compared unfavourably to exponents of the well-made "naturalistic" play and at the same time is thought to be a more sophisticated "naturalism".

Then, oh, it seems to me, a distributor with an absence of what might be called "style", and a dismissive attitude to the people-social experience called "tears".

Crash, of course, exists in many different forms. A craftsman who makes a chair impossible to sit on is failing down on the job. However good a night look, sitting is its prime function. We might admire the beauty of its massive construction, its superb finish, its curved legs, but if it fails over it is not a chair. That is, if it doesn't work, it's not good.

By the same token "style" seems to have taken on another meaning. When critics talk about it, they are not referring to the quality of the writing, or the imagination, or even what happens between text, actor and audience, but something more mechanical and conventional. This is more or less a hangover from a concern with the origins of dramatic fiction, transposed into the "well-made play". Unfortunately, the whole trend of 20th-century theatre has been away from fears of construction, towards a kind of rush and effort in performance. A kind of frenzied criticism.

And in Australia, what's more, the use of forms derived or starting from Brecht, Expressionism, the Absurd, nihilism and anything else that seems useful at the time, proceeds apace. Australian playwrights seem to be great collectors of styles, using any device that makes a moment work. Fortunately, there are a few



directions, including the playwright themselves, letting the play stand up and be considered.

Linda Aronson's *The Fall Guy* is episodic in structure and presents a set of character types and situations as a drama-series. It is very much concerned with appearance: the surfaces of the characters and how they perceive they fit into their little societies, how they speak. It is not concerned with the historical realism of the characters or much at the emotional truth of episodes between them. And even these realizations are a long way from sentiment.

For me it was something of a relief to see a detached attitude to characters and situations that could easily have become mawkish. Aronson's style is perhaps closer to Remond's in *The Missing Words* than anyone else's, though on a more modest scale and subject. I was glad to see something that concerned not only old variety artists and the theatre but the gay liberation, more unselfish.

The Fall Guy is Jack (Norman Kaye), an old variety artist. He sings a bit, dances a bit and tries to get laughs. In with his act, as we see it, is not very good. He now has passed if ever had one. Success has eluded him, and his partner of 28 years, Gordon (Terence Donavan) is sick of playing the good, as he has to in the title's latest incarnation. Gordon walks out of the partnership.

Norman Kaye's Jack not very smart, but unprofession. Likes people a lot, easily galled. A jaded old expert, a drunk, a

survivor with a paralysed arm. Not a well considered, he has no sense of place in the world and is unable to turn his lover's personality into anything funny. Not aware of himself, but self-pitying. A fall guy, a pity.

Gordon, on the other hand, although he has a hungering sense of friendship for Jack, walks out and up. But all his half-hearted efforts to help Jack only leave him dangling on the end of his rope.

Counterpointing Jack's decline — the distance from having an act and then not having one — is a pair of guys, Sam, a simple stadium, and Hugo, a manic, game-playing manipulator also have a relationship in trouble. Sam (not well played by Stephen Oldfield) in a seriously-revived gay libber matting is do his MA and get on in the world like Gordon. Hugo (dramatically performed by Mervyn Bratke), though in love with Sam, doesn't let that interfere with his flights of fun.

One of these games is his playing along with Jack in a pub where they have just met. Gordon comes to see Jack. Jack pretends he already has a new partner in Hugo. Hugo keeps up the facade until he sets up Jack with a date at a gay cabaret. Jack thinks that's a big break, really it's another step on the way down. Gordon's attempt to help is a spot on an important club show. Jack's resistance and final response is so absurd everyone in the show has brought him to this point. The management turns off the lights, leaving Jack on a dark, empty stage, taking the fall.

Mark Radeg allows the play to do its own job, aided by terrific performances from Norman Kaye and Mervyn Bratke. The setting is simple and the set bit of gaudiness. In the execution of Jack's performance to the gay libbers, it is very well realised. Here Radeg has Jack perform a sort of a variant on it to an audience surrogate, with his "friends", and we, behind it. His triumphal return backstage with the growing knowledge that he has breached a native moment.

Linda Aronson is already an accomplished playwright, and I look forward to seeing more of her work. I don't suppose either the after or the political wing of the gay lib will like *The Fall Guy* a lot, for the same reason that sentimentalists of *The Tie* (sic) won't. Both have been used as epitomes of a culture or class in a play that left me feeling a bit depressed, but a preface of a new idea. May many more drag from the firm.

Leading Lady

"Bright entertainment . . . geared to the talents of Jill Perryman . . ."



Leading Lady, a musical review starring Jill Perryman at St. Martin's Theatre, Melbourne. Closed 13 March. Produced by William Orr except John McElroy. With Brian Doherty, Doreen Hillier.

Choreography, Robert Bond; costumes, Bob Groom; musical direction, Philip Scott; musicals, Philip Scott and Bill Craig; book, Bill Craig; lyrics, Bill Craig; Presented by Bill Doherty and William Orr.

Attending the press conference for Jill Perryman in Melbourne, and hearing the star talk about the show she was going to appear in at the St. Martin's Theatre made me feel rather apprehensive; everything I mentioned about it gave the impression it would turn out to be one of those uncomfortable evenings when the leading lady would appear stranger than the content. From past experience I knew it was impossible for Perryman to give a bad performance. But writer John McElroy has formerly disappointed me with his material: wonderful ideas which fall apart in the writing, sometimes even wrong. All that I heard at this press conference seemed to indicate this would again be the result.

Happily, I can report that, as was at the St. Martin's, *Leading Lady* is a bright, entertainment, exuberantly tuneful, geared to the talents of Perryman, who is most than ably supported by Bryce Davies and

Doreen Hillier. The original show ran for six months at Sydney's theatre restaurant the Magic Lint. For its presentation in the 400-seater St. Martin's apparently some 50 per cent of the musical is different.

A divergence of the then play-line running through the "tragedy" review makes it appear corny and banal, which is really not it. With the show's leading lady, her understudy, and all other possible replacements taken off by our press, audience providing no suitable substitute, a desperate chance is taken at an unoriginal part from the book, Gladys Zoch. Of course a name like that you has to be changed. She therefore becomes Jill Zoch, and soon reveals the persistent star quality, which she repeatedly proves, scores a huge success in Hollywood and finally making an aspidators' home, before leaving it to make a comeback.

It really is a backstage, with scenes from past. Philip Scott review singing with standard tunes of the last half-century, overgrown item musicals of the late decade and even a send-up of *The Wizard of Oz*. Frequently the words of well-known numbers are changed to fit the moment and locality, which is where McElroy excels.

There are several Southern numbers ("Broadway Baby", "Send in the Clowns", "Comedy Tonight"),

showstoppers like "Let me Entertain You" and "If They Could See Me Now" and finally Perryman on stage alone with a group of songs which obviously include "People" and "Don't Rose On My Parade" (from her big hit show *Flame Girl*). One regretted though the absence of "Flaming Ages", her show-stopper from "I Do, I Do".

Never before has one been able to see so much of Perryman on stage, displaying every facet of her huge talent, assessing the fact yet again she is Australia's one big star, with "star quality" apparent every time she steps foot on stage. To see her change vocally and rapidly in rapid succession as she portrays the characters in the additional segments is to witness the extent of her versatility. A sly smile, a slight raising of an eyebrow, a deadpan look, or an overbright smile, easily achieved with perfect timing, which is the result of more than 20 years' stage experience. Perryman's vocal talents of course is never in doubt (but it was caught on her going to brighten up two Caribbean numbers before regaining breath from a dance routine).

This all assumes the fact it is really "an evening with Jill Perryman". At the same time, the talents of Davies and Hillier should not be under-rated. As a duo they consistently make one forget their real purpose is to hold the fort while Perryman is changing, in fact they are always on her level. At one point Hillier gives a moving rendering of Coward's "Why Must the Show Go On?", and there's a delightful "I Remember It Well" with an aged Perryman and Davies at the actors' home.

The show has no broad sets, but Perryman appears in a fine array of costumes, and the two main are well served with, on the first half, mainly blue-black, and, in the second, red-and-black, and bright solids.

Clyde Radford (who would be perfectly capable himself of understanding Perryman) has provided the necessary choreography, fully realising anything spectacular would be out of place. A three-piece orchestra under the direction of pianist Philip Scott meet that adequately furnishes the show's musical backing. And the overall sense of that post-modern of ours, William Orr, is everywhere apparent, particularly in the short pauses and quick changes.

Leading Lady is not a great show. It probably could not exist without Jill Perryman. But with the present combination of Perryman, plus the talented Davies and Hillier, it presents an evening of sheer uncut enjoyment.

Directed by

Ken G. Hall

Australia's most successful producer and director of films in the 1950s was Ken G. Hall, whose book *Directed by Ken G. Hall: The Autobiography of an Australian Film-Maker*, will be published in July by Lansdowne.

In addition to novels, Hall made 17 feature films, almost all of which wereounding box office success.

Three extracts from the book are published here. The first concerns his meeting with the actor Bert Harley — a meeting which led to the making of *On Our Selection*, the first of the famous series of "Dad and Dave" comedies. In the second extract, he talks about *Thoroughbred*, one of his more ambitious films. In the third, he reveals reservations about recent policies of government aid to the film industry, a subject which is developed controversially in the later chapters of the book.

It was a firm knock and the man who followed it into the office was tallish, square, with a thin face and a strong, hooked nose. I had not seen him before. At least, I had not seen him at himself.

You have unprinted copy in my office that morning late in 1950 charged the whole course of my life.

He had friendly, humorous eyes and as he held out his hand he said, "Ken Hall?"

"I'm Bert Harley. I believe we're going to make a picture together."

If he had said he believed we were about to climb Everest together I could not have been more taken. "That's great! But I wish someone had told me about it." "You'll hear," he said. "I just left Stuart and it's all fixed."

Stuart was Stuart F. Doyle, managing director of Union Theatres, Australian Films — and a flock of subsidiary companies. I was officially assigned to the managing director and remained in a rather unsupervised carpeted office on the eleventh floor of the State Theatre building in Sydney — not because I rated it, but because it was previously the office of a director of the company who had died.

Seeing my confusion, Harley said, "You're interested, aren't you?" I assured him I most certainly was interested. "What are we going to make?"

"I thought you'd have guessed that."

I was not doing very well. I had yet to learn actors are "different" people, even the very good ones.

"Oh, the *Selection*, of course!" Bert Harley in *On Our Selection*. I saw play in it at the Palace a couple of years ago. You were great, Mr. Harley, and it was a honor to see a boorish fall about laughing like a dog that night."





He passed confirmation: "Yes, the old *Solitudes*. It's been good to me."

I have from trade gossip that it had been many years since that good to him. He'd made a small fortune from it, too, in collaboration with Raymond Drygan in 1962, he had adapted it from Steele Rudd's best-seller. They bought the dramatic rights from Arthur Tracy Davis, who was of course Steele Rudd. The play opened at the King's Theatre, Melbourne, on 11th October 1912, under the management of Husley & Goss with Bert Buckley as Dad (and producer) and Fred MacDonald as Dave. Those two set the first time presented Rudd's characters up from the printed page, and the public immediately accepted the images they created. They have long since gone into Australian folklore and endared as no other Australian character characters have been able to endure. The play immediately became, and for many years remained, a box-office smash in the cities and the country's outback towns.

Despite all this, I had continual reservations about making *On Our Selection*. I was young, rough, and still lacking in practical showmanship background enough to want to "do something better". But, at least, I had the common sense to start up about it at that point. If I had not, what developed into a warm, personal friendship from that day and ended with Bert's death in 1953 at the age of eighty-two, might never have happened and I, far more than he, would have been the loser. And I would very likely not be writing this book. We made out one but four feature films together in the next nine years.

There are vital lessons to be learned by young directors and producers at the very outset, long before they get involved in actual production. The lessons are not taught in film schools because the teachers in those schools don't even know about them, much less understand them. They have nothing to do with technique, artistic control, any animation, acting, direction, writing. But these lessons are fundamental background to, and in fact control, the single vital dimension, the *tiny-fear-thousand-dollar question* that you have a one-hundred-million-dollar answer to (as it did in *The Godfather* and *Aster*). What shall we make?

In my consultancy I would have opted for the vulgar "something better". Doyle and Buckley were older and wiser men and went for the service-oriented *The Solitudes* provided. The film proved a bonanza, and I learned a vital lesson.

The budgeting returns from the first three films had made it possible to extend our studio space over the whole area of the original shooting rock, about 100 feet by 80 feet — big enough to do anything we would ever need. The sound-proofing was far from being completely satisfactory, however, it was too vast a job to be done properly and the cost would have been prohibitive. We put up

walls in, there was no alternative. There were dog barks, however faint, at the sound track of many films, even as late as *Sorcery*, where dog barks certainly were not called for.

For *Thoroughbred* I built up the sets, allowed myself the luxury of an assistant director for the first time. An important departure from the team was Frank Harley, who headed up a new industrial division we set up, as production director and cameraman, as a series of unusual circumstances made for major clients like BHP and others. He was wedged in to the early insistence on "depth of focus", which meant putting on the light and stopping down the lens with stops. "Hard" photographic results. Guy had always used the lens for its source of dimension, had not worked much to any extent until he joined us.

George Heath, who had been second camera on *Grandad Rudd*, succeeded Harley as head of cinematography and did such an outstanding job that he remained in that capacity through our ensuing fourteen pictures, including *Sorcery*, after the free press levels caused by the war. George was a student of photography, carefully studying the work of the top American and German, reading, going to the movies, writing, it paid off and when his chance came he was ready and rarely put a photographic fact wrong from the day he was appointed to the job on *Thoroughbred*.

George Heath, in my opinion, was the father of the modern style of black-and-white photography in feature films in Australia. Dramatically opposed to Harley's style, Heath cut down sharply on the amount of light and stopped up the lens to compensate. His methods produced attractively lit figures against soft, appealing backgrounds. Where Harley was shooting generally at 5.6 or 6.5 in the studio, Heath's exposure was usually around 2.8 to 3.5. The often "hard", especially sharp look had gone and now we had rounded, beautifully worn images like those produced by Lee Garmes, James Wong Howe, Gregg Toland, Karl Freund, Hal Rosson, Rudolf Maté, Ernest Miller and so many of the highly expensive cameramen of Hollywood's studios.

The elevation of Heath and the arrival of George Kenyon — professionally I. Also, but a warm, friendly and highly talented man who was George to everyone — were two events which had a far-reaching effect on Citroën's rapid technical development. Technically we'd always been ahead of our competitors. For instance, the sound coming from Arthur Smith's American-made recorders was superior to that being achieved from the virtually "gold-plated" American RCA gear imported by Frank Thring, and used of course on all Eiftee features. It was not that Smith's gear was better or even as good as its imported competitor. The fine technical precision given to the recordings themselves, and their treatment in the laboratory was responsible for the sound

edge we had both on Eiftee and the British equipped Pagewood plant at National studios.

George Kenyon, an Englishman and an artist of considerable quality, had been a set designer and scenic artist for J. C. Williamson Doyle was closing down the Union Theatres workshop and so most of economy set up our own art department and workshop. Kenyon seemed to be the man we needed because, with his varied talents, he was potentially right to head the special effects division which I wanted to set up as soon as possible. We got that responsibility reasonably soon after, when an Australian architect, Eric Thompson, who had spent some years as an assistant in the art department of MGM or Hollywood, returned to Australia and we took him into the team.

The fourth new man in was Ronald Whelan, the assistant director I allowed myself! He'd had some experience in England and from then on our script breakdowns and our shooting schedules were much better organised. For the benefit of those unused to production parlance, the term "assistant director" is a misnomer. The big directors overseas often had three or more assistants ("Yes sir, Mr. Whelan, whatever you say"). They do not assist the director to direct. Their job is organisation ahead of the director, first with the script breakdown and preparation of the shooting schedule in consultation with the director, then making sure every detail is ready, actors know their lines and are on the set at time.

Costel De Mille, with his huge spectacles and thousands of extras, had up to six assistants. This was because another important part of their job is the control of movements of extras on the set, while the director is concentrating on his principals and the vital foreground action.

Well, *Thoroughbred* we were using back projection for the first time and I had heard that it was full of bugs. But Kenyon and George Heath, with Stuart Wilson, projectionist, combined especially well to get the most important information off the ground.

There was a pre-deal deal and error before we got a working satisfactory. The early experimental shots looked all right to the eye, but when we saw the film projected, the background screen was dark on one side or the other. *Recess?* The eye of the camera was not looking directly, and mathematically correctly left it to read, the eye of the projector and we got "fall-off". Use one wide a lens on the projector, or narrow for that matter, and you get "hot spot", a hot corner to the image and fall-off all round it. The lens eye-to-eye but was and is fundamental, but no one had thought to tell us. To get the excellent results later achieved on the so very precise back projection, we found it necessary to call in surveyors, who worked out the precise angles and distances. There were permanently moving into the studio from one floor to another. There was no margin for error.

A horse-racing picture seemed to be a contrast for most audiences, particularly Australians, and "Thoroughbred" at the boxoffice proved that the theory was not wrong. But, getting it on the screen was not all that easy because the film was big in size and scope for our limited resources.

It had an American writer and was to have an American star. John McCormick had found that Helen Twelvetrees — a name to remember — was willing to come to Australia at the price we were offering but would be bringing her husband and baby "with her husband?" Baby?

Wouldn't I like the sound of that just as all the reviews and letters from the press were not supposed to have husbands and certainly not babies?

Twelvetrees was, from just photographs, still beautiful and we knew her to be a sound actress. She had been leading woman in a number of major studio-film stars and had starred in numerous "B" movies of a good general standard. She was as good a name within reasonable bounds as one could hope to get. Censorship's casting was always based on a figure that could be recognized in the home market, Australia and New Zealand.

We had a publicity conference with Herb Hayward and his boys and decided to keep the baby secret. We knew we could get tremendous publicity for the film with the arrival of a real live Hollywood matron star and we certainly did with the show these boys put on for the arrival of Helen Twelvetrees. Half Sydney was at the cinema.

The husband they could play right down and perhaps no harm would be done to her image as a beautiful and highly desirable, though unavailable, young woman. But the baby? Film stars just did not have babies. If they did they never talked about them, a mother's belly long ago blows out, but I had facts then.

So it was decided, and Helen knew all about the plan, that the child would be taken off the slab by a specially engaged nurse before the ladies and gentlemen of the press got to talk with the couple.

It worked. Helen, her husband and child lived in an apartment at Darling Point and no one disturbed them. Helen's daily working and social life was plain with publicity. But her private life was strictly private. There never was a publicity campaign like the one behind Helen Twelvetrees. It had a hundred facets. My good friend Bill Sisley, at the time starting up as General Motors export Sydney outlet, provided a Pontiac with limousine drivers to transport Helen anywhere she wanted to go. And wherever she went she stopped the traffic. She was invited outside Farmer's store when she was to shop and it took a phalanx of police to clear the decks. But the highlight was the Lord Mayor's civic reception at the Town Hall. It was a big show with members of the town and their wives crowding to talk to Helen.

The Lord Mayor, Alderman McIlroy, made it a great day for the Irish and for us. At the end of his speech of welcome, he

grabbed Helen and planted a smacker fair on her mouth. The Press cameras were right fist-forward. "Again please," they pleaded, "We weren't ready."

But that did not have to please. Mikel Mayor could hardly be restrained and obliged again and again.

Herb Hayward recalls that Jack Woody, Twelvetrees' husband, grappled in his box: "What's with this guy — he got hot pants?" Which Hayward avers was the first time he ever heard the expression.

The Lord Mayor's exuberant advances with the beautiful Hollywood star made a field day for the Press right around Australia.

The story that Helen was a mother with a child never did break, but others, for once we see, almost did.

Just where do we stand on all this? In five years no sign of a consecutive plus has emerged. It does not appear that this year was a real, significant, well-considered concept. And down from which an industry might grow. The "new-ers" production has been a series of individual, wild, catch-as-catch-can scrambles. Get yourself a script, get it approved, get some money from the Film Development Corporation, scrounge round and as at present rank up the race from private sources, get together a production crew from here and there — and off you go! It's hardly the way to make successful mass pictures, to build an industry.

From the outset, it was necessary to take a long, hard look at any plan of Government assistance to an ailing film industry wherever such a plan has been implemented. Few indeed have been successful. When did you last see a Canadian feature film?

The most notable casualty has been the British film-production industry, now at derricks no longer able. And yet the British have had "golden" and "silver" and dozens of various kinds since the early thirties. None of them has worked effectively in creating the much-vaunted Eady Plan, now in disarray.

I quote from an article in the authoritative trade paper *Screen International* of 27 September 1973 under the heading "LAMOUR: PROBES INDUSTRY":

It presents (in part) the report of a study group, chaired by Mrs Rose Short, MP, and working for the Labour Party's national executive committee. It begins by saying it views the film industry "not only in commercial terms but also in its contribution to the culture of Britain".

It goes on: "The feature film industry is now in serious decline and the whole industry is in need of immediate fundamental, long-term financing and re-organisation. We fully accept that Britain cannot be self-supporting in the supply of films for its home market and that no film industry will continue to be based in a wider international market."

That unhappy situation has come about

despite all the plus, including the Eady Plan. In considering this statement it is as well to be cognisant of the fact that the population of the British home market alone is roughly four times that of Australia. In view of that, and the euphoria of some recent success, it is as well for Australian filmmakers to take stock of themselves and the industry they want to create.

For a start the Australian industry can never be a big industry. Not while we have a population of only fourteen million people. And twenty million would not make much difference.

The countries outside the United States and big on even reasonably sized film industries — Japan, Russia, Italy, India, Germany, France, Sweden — just don't happen to have English as their native tongue. In most cases, and especially since the coming of sound, the language barrier has built up production walls. The countries where feature-film production is languishing are the English-speaking countries — and that statement does not except the United States. Hollywood's production is seven times less than the peak of the thirties. Why? Because the demand is not there. Because the market on the street is no longer as keen to go to the movies as it used to be. It costs him too much for a start — as much as a night out at a big musical comedy or a legitimate theatre used to cost not long ago.

When a producer begins calculating how much he'll get for his overseas sale — figures if you like to swing in hopeful but basically dubious prospectus from away back in the thirties — he is counting treble. He'll get damn little in the long run.

As far as I am aware, only five Australian films from the thirties on, and up to 1973 anyway, have independently broken into the American market, three of them as a State rights basis. Two were from *Circusland*, *Leaven and Lazarus* (*Pengaroo of the Deep* in the U.S.) and *Opium of the Wilderness* (*Wild Innocence*). The third was Charles Chauvel's *Party*. *Theatrical Miraculous* with the final one, handled by distributors (because they had a financial interest), was my own *South and Chauvel's Son of Matthew*. Returns to Australia from all of them would not add up to much.

I firmly believe Australian producers should stay with conservatively budgeted films. They should not be carried away by any overseas distributor's financial participation — MGM made many films in England, under some pressure, but not many of them achieved general release in the U.S.

There is no doubt in my mind that high-budget films, in a truly massive market, are not a safe foundation for building an industry.

The figures each man can bring black ink above in the ledger will be high indeed. The risks are too great. I do not believe we have the right to take them — yet.

International
Lively trends in

POLAND

Bogdan Gieraczyński

" . . . all art, including theatre, ought to remain outside the political framework"

• Bogdan Gieraczyński is a widely respected Polish theatre journalist. His writing is illustrated by the fact that the editor of all the professor was recently granted an interview with Edward Górecki, leading soloist in Józef Godlewski's Laboratory Theatre.

Polish theatre was much of no time to its variety. Besides the classical theatre, the

avant-garde as well as the experimental have established themselves consistently as to puzzle theatre-goers all over the world.

One might well ask why. Well, it seems to me that the form of the classical, the traditional, theatre has become largely clichéd, and this is an objective fact in a great many countries. It is possible that the

theatre is temporary, a revolt somehow of the progressive of experimental groups. The theatre of the avant-garde, which was beginning to take shape in the late fifties, overcame almost all the classically traditional conventions. It made away with most of the scenic conventions so characteristic of the traditional setting, it laid the main stress on bodily expression, it



Cross 2 Theatre's
graduation of
The Great Class
by Tadeusz Kantor

simplified, and quite often excluded elements of monologue and costume. Finally, it abolished the division into stage and boxes, on the one hand, and audience and public on the other, thus providing spectators with active participation in a performance as part of a theatrical happening.

The appearance of these challenging "theatre experiences" has in some cases drawn the attention of a large portion of the public away from its classical theatre — while the spiritual leaders of the new-style theatres were propagating a come-to-discoat about for the traditional theatre. As everybody knows, this has not happened.

Some avant-garde theatres, mainly from third-world countries, have been concerned with politics more than with artistic inquiry. They have attempted to influence human minds and work on human emotions with the political content of their performances. Some of these ideas have, indeed, been quite edifying and enchanting, and yet it is difficult to retain the impression that they have been wrongly based. In my view all art, including the theatre, ought to remain outside the political framework. The theatre is not a parliamentary chamber, although the review is quite often the case.

Polish theatrical art has had long-lived traditions, both as a classical and an experimental form. The Polish avant-gardists are rich in experience which has inspired artists all over the world. I think the separation is largely due to the fact that Polish experimental theatres have managed to rid themselves of certain, everyday human canons to concentrate exclusively on technique, stage-setting, direction, acting and so on (i.e., in other words, due to an interest in the pure art).

In this correspondence I should like to draw the Australian reader's attention to what has been only summarising in the Polish theatre lately. Classical theatre in Poland unfortunately seems to be persistently stagnating.

KANTOR — THEATRE FROM BEYOND

The pioneer of Tadeusz Kantor's CRICOT 2 Theatre, of course, has become quite an icon in the world's theatrical map, not as a display of acting powers, but as a stage producer. What does this signify in the context of Kantor's artistic experience? The director, fascinated with plastic art in the theatre throws into theatrical orbit a situation plastically framed. A plastic work thus transformed acquires unequivocal impetus. Stage is so conceived as to provide any misinterpretation of the work performed.

The DEAD CLASS is the latest presentation of the CRICOT 2 Theatre, a production that might be described as a spiritualized show. For, as during a spiritualized act "singing" from beyond is being experienced, participation in and reception of *The Dead Class* is only partial. Naturally, one can try to persuade oneself that one is

totally immersed in the performance. Such an impression, however, will be false, for, as it is impossible to identify oneself with death, it is likewise impossible to do so with *The Dead Class*. And there precisely lies Kantor's genius: he constructs a world of art which cannot be emotionally perceived like *Kosciuszko and Jozef for example*. The staging is obviously derived, but — as the artist himself says — "a work of art should be inaccessible like death".

Tadeusz Kantor's *The Dead Class* and Jerry Grotowski's *Apocalypse now Fugue* (first produced eight years ago, with 12 performances in Australia in April and May of 1974) can be compared — notwithstanding of course — as a fundamental basis just as in Grotowski's case. Grotowski made it possible for the spectators fully to identify themselves with the performance. *The Dead Class*, in Kantor's view, provides such a possibility. The anatomy of indifference and engagement, death and life — both directors have managed consistently to realize their respective designs.

The Dead Class has been the most important, most impressive and most original of all the recent performances on Polish stages. One can well assume that it will have a long-standing, world-wide career like *Apocalypse now Fugue*. A recognition in overseas success was the first prize awarded to the theatre for the performance at the 19th Edinburgh Festival. Michael Billington wrote in *The Guardian* that if *The Dead Class* was still a masterpiece, then the word was devoid of meaning.

GRUTOWSKI — WHAT NEXT?

It is often said that life is a theatre and theatre is life. In spite of its being in all the bulk, this saying is relevant and apt today. Indeed, the theatre not only finds inspiration in everyday life, but it also seems to be interpreting its form and its content, that of all branches of art coming closest to life. Contemporary life is made up of all the components to be found in the theatre, such as games, hunting, punishing, putting on a mask, competing etc.

If, in some countries like, for instance, France, there is a decline due to people being fed up with the theatre around them — in the streets, at work, in the shop, in the government and so on — why should one then go to the theatre?

The formula that life is a theatre (and vice versa) has been challenged by the artistic production of, among others, maybe even above all, Jerry Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre. This challenge lies in the roots of all Grotowski's concepts. Since the moment the theatre was set up in 1968, leading through conventional and non-conventional performances up to unconventional ones, colonizing in post-theatrical experiments. The consequence of Grotowski's activities was an infinite repetition of the formula that theatre is life and the other way round. As an example, one can cite *Apocalypse now Fugue* and para-theatrical experiments such as

Special Project, Acting Therapy, Acting Seminar and Meditation about

The next step in the activities of the Laboratory Theatre is to provide everyone who feels lost in with the possibility of certain experience. This is done by means of different types of para-theatrical activity based on the idea of active participation.

There exists the so-called *alive culture*, by which a major artistic creation which provides the public with such products as film, music, theatre, books etc. There also exists a passive sort of culture which is called *participation in culture*. The difference between the two is that the former is destined for the privileged, whereas the latter is for virtually everybody.

In consequence of Grotowski's para-theatrical experiments, the split into the creator and the recipient has ceased to exist. Everyone taking part actively in such a para-theatrical experience can find personal satisfaction resulting from his being a creator himself. He can satisfy his particular needs of a spiritual and sensory kind. It is in such an act of artistic creation that one experience linking analogous to those of a professional, say, an actor.

The latest para-theatrical programme of Grotowski's that I have briefly characterized is the most original form of creation in Poland. But it is of interest to the international public, as can be inferred from such projects as the Intercontinental project in France, Italy, Sweden, Venezuela, Canada and the U.S.

The results of the present artistic activities of Grotowski's Theatre are fascinating and revealing. I shall come back to this problem in another article.

THEATRE WITHOUT WORDS

Performance is an ancient and unique form of art because its roots are to be found in the human culture, and unique because in the present it has become a sort of marginal art. Again from Mieczyslaw Minkiewicz, Jean-Louis Barrault, Szymon Majewski, Henryk Tomaszewski, a practitioner by virtually no one. It is thus all the more pleasant for me to note the existence of the Performance Theatre in Poland directed by Henryk Tomaszewski.

Tomaszewski's performance is based on spectacle. His creator does not practice the sort of performance he found when he entered this field that is, performances specializing in solo performances such as juggling, contortion, constructed by means of gestures and so on. The notion "performance" has with Tomaszewski, acquired a new meaning and a new artistic expression which are the components of the modern structure of the total theatre. The performances of the Performance Theatre are filled with profound thought. In a metaphorical and literary way, they address the viewer, provoking him to think and to imagine. That is why Tomaszewski's Theatre has broken all the barriers of cultural tradition and has become intelligible to people all over the world.

Forsaken Sisters from the Legend of My Twardowski was a recent production of the Państwowe Teatr directed by Henryk Tomaszewski himself, and based on his scenario, and with his choreography. During the 20 years of the theatre's existence, it was the 10th programme, which, in a way, is a summing-up of Tomaszewski's experiments made thus far.

Through the performance was on the highest level, the same Tomaszewski's mood of Tomaszewski's previous productions is struck by one thing: the lack of elements that would allow him to regard it as a revealing or searching one. Tomaszewski has employed here all the intuitions and ideas he has exploited before, in this way becoming an imitator of himself!

Though I tried to obtain a photo of the performance, the turned out to be impossible. So the reader won't find any photo of the *Forsaken Sisters*, because the director and managers of the Państwowe Teatr are not interested in publicity, in fact, they find journalists and all publicity a pain in the ass! The experience of Tomaszewski's Państwowe Teatr is bigger than its beautiful and graceful, and I'd like to see all foreign journalists and the public about it.

Forsaken Sisters is based on a Polish legend dating back to the Middle Ages. The legend tells of a famous astrologer, forerunner and magus whose name was Twardowski.

The most characteristic motif of the legend is the kidnapping of Twardowski by a band of devils and placing him on the moon.

The spectacle is full of profound artistic and aesthetic values, in contrast to Tomaszewski's earlier performances, in which philosophical and intellectual content was dominant.

In spite of its being also to a foreign theatre-goer, the production would nevertheless be intelligible to him by appealing to his sense, since it is like a colorful fairy tale.

This "realistically utopian" performance is filled with the content that makes it possible for the viewer's imagination to play freely — the viewer feels using different words in effect.

ONE CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE

Outside my main concern, I would like to say a few words about the only classical performance that has caused much stir. I

am thinking about *The Wedding*, by Stanisław Wyspiański, which preceded the 20th premiere of the Teatr Wybrane in Gdańsk, and was produced for the 50th anniversary of his outstanding theatre.

The play is a Polish surreal drama depicting with dramatic realism the history of Poland, peasant dressbacks and the patriotic of Poles, thus becoming a symbolic picture of what is known as Polish. To a foreign spectator, the play is intelligible in the way the Japanese Kabuki theatre is, simply because it originated in a cultural tradition different from the European or American one.

However, on the above-mentioned production (director, Stanisław Latoński; designer, Maria Kolodziej), the form seems to be so clear and so fabulously colourful as to become universal and more important than the content. Because of this, the performance is a great success in its appeal to foreign theatre-goers.

Even the theatre that is most deeply rooted in national tradition can speak a language intelligible to all people. Thus, I think, should be its aim in Poland, Austria, Africa, America — everywhere.



Teatr Wybrane production of Wyspiański's *The Wedding*

The Australian Dance Theatre

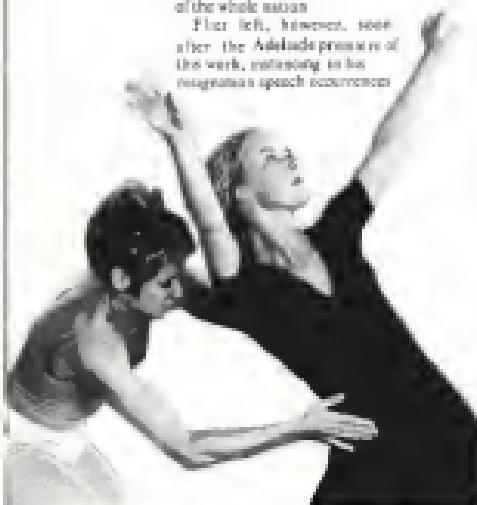
"Building a new company from scratch is extremely laborious and time-consuming"

When the old Australian Dance Theatre finally disbanded under the weasel-like in 1972, after a rather disastrous Sydney season, some people thought that the group was better off dead rather than having to drag on its existence as it was. Others considered that the company was worth preserving, that it was severely depleted at the time and that all that was needed was a replacement for the current artistic director, Elizabeth Dulman.

In 1973 there was a fresh breeze through the company in the form of former Nederlands Dans Theater director Jap Flotz and his wife Wil de la Rye. Flotz was appointed co-artistic director with Dulman, and, watching the company's performances from then on one was conscious of a renaissance amongst the dancers. Apart from being given some exciting and innovative choreography in the form of Flotz's *McKee* and *Knuckles* *Answers*, they were technically stronger thanks to the rigorous discipline of Willy, and seemed keener in performance. The whole tenor of the group was going away from the not-enough-a-good-enough, uncertain and hesitant sub-Judithian choreography that had been its staple diet when Dulman was in sole control.

The pinnacle of their endeavour was in their participation in The Australian Opera's *Revel of Parrotage*, of which Flotz was director and choreographer. It was this work that brought them to the notice of the whole nation.

Flotz left, however, soon after the Adelaide premiere of the work, returning to his native German speech occurrences.



of internal pressure, questions of authority and lack of support (for him) from the members of the board (a familiar cry in this country). He then became the artistic director of the Dance Company (NDW) and Dulman carried on alone right up to the final disbanding of the company.

Just what precipitated the closing of the company at this juncture (with an flourishing dance academy under Ross Head) is not quite clear. There were rumours that the company was too far in the red to carry on, and that an artistic cut-off within the Cultural Administration had decided that Dulman did not quite fit the artistic image that it was trying to build up. But these are but idle curiosities. As for as I can see (and I was dance critic at the Adelaide Advertiser for more than two years, so I do have grounds to speak), the dancers had simply outgrown Dulman's concepts and choreographical creativity and were disillusioned after the gloomy future that seemed to be in store of them after the disastrous opening of *Revel of Parrotage*. Their performances were lacklustre, the putrid gone out of the company.

So the Australian Ballet Theatre was formed as an entity throughout 1976 but plans were still being made.

The absence of a professional dance company was embarrassing and quite unsatisfactory for the cultural plains of South Australia, so, after former Ballet Rambert choreographer Jonathan Taylor came out to make his highly Craig (and highly impressive) *Starz End* for Ballet Victoria, strenuous and sincere requests were made to him to become the artistic director of the new Australian Dance Theatre.

He arrived in January of this year and immediately began auditioning dancers, contacting choreographers like Hubbard's Norman Morris, and Christopher Bruce, to come out and mount works for the company. He brought with him two ex-members of the Rambert company, Julia Stiles and Joseph Szigeti, as ballet masters and codirectors respectively.

Taylor's hopes for the new company are that it will be a small, dynamic group, firmly based in the Martha Graham technique, that is, basically a company of collegues, with diverging strengths and different talents.

Ten of the 13 members of the company are Australian — not bad considering that almost half of Ballet Rambert is Australian and that there are a few others snatched liberally through the London Festival Ballet, Royal Ballet and Australian Dance Theatre (You can't tell me we haven't got the talent). In fact,

Taylor himself has said that Australian dancers have talents unduly. He was quite impressed with the energy (which seems rather unfortunate than Australian dancers have an innate desire to prove themselves, he said me, a drive for exploration, self-expression and a certain

If he is aware of these strengths (and also weaknesses), it argues well for the development of the dancer in his new company. However, building a new company from scratch is a most laborious and time-consuming. Apart from building up a repertoire for the company (of which more later), he has had to involve himself in such issues as getting proper facilities for the dancer, securing a good dancing surface, appointments of stage manager and lighting designer and having meetings with the Duncan Administration to confirm his policy and plans for the future. From what I gather, that has now all been completed and the company is hard at work learning the ballets for its premiere performances in the new state-of-the-art Hoy

Majestic Theatre in June.



The company is intent on spreading its influence through three forms of performance and participation (such as the three-week June annual experimental or take-over workshop performances (as well as outright on-the-road seasons, for which The Space in the Festival Centre will come in useful) and an audience outreach and community performance programme. It is a concerted effort to get the dancers before the public in exciting and dynamic works, and to attract young, critical and loyal audiences which no company can do without.

The question of company "image" and "style" has not yet been discussed, naturally. That will have to wait until public performances are under way. However, because of Taylor's long association with Ballet Ramble, it is expected that the visual image will be made up partly of works that have served that amateur company well over the years.

Taylor himself will reproduce his own *Te Deum* (spectre (the name of the age of Henry VIII)), reliving lovely work that never fails to entertain, *Saga* (and noting that Ballet Victoria is no longer as well as in contemporary new works. Guest director of Ramble, Norma Merton will re-create his Solo (described as a Women's Lib work) and a new (title), *Seven Songs* (music, the songs of the American, arranged by Chailloppaj). One hopes that it might be possible one day to get Merton to recreate his masterly *Ther a la Show* (in Birn's *Sinfonia*). Current director of

Ramble, Christopher Bruce has reproduced his ballets *Reverie*, *Wings* and *They Dream Earth*.

Other works include new ballets by John Chisholm (also on Ramble), John Blaikie (*Night of the Four Moons*, music by George Crumb), Joseph Soghoi, Sophie and Australian Dan Asker, who has recently created *Monkeys in a Cage* for the Australian Ballet.

This appears to be quite an embarrassment of riches. And who knows what exciting takes may come out of the company's choreographic session in The Space in November as well as the company's participation in Ballet 77 in Canberra later this year?

But a dance company is only as good as its dancers and, here too, the Australian Dance Theatre is strong, with Blaikie and Soghoi dancing, as well as Israel, Pamela Wickham (both ex-Ballet Victoria) and other Australian dancers recently recruited from overseas like Cheryl Stock, Margaret Wilson (ex-Netherlands Dans Theatre) and Raymond Lewis. Teachers for the company include Blaikie and one of Martha Graham's star dancers, Yurka Krasna.

All of this, of course, is under the guidance of Jonathan Taylor, but I don't really have any qualms here. Taylor is an extremely talented and experienced man of the dance, having studied at the Royal Academy and undertaken major roles in the classical ballet repertoire, as well as in works by such modern masters as Gino Tagli (Would that they could get him out to recreate some works for them, *Alceste*, say, or *Embrace Tiger and Return to Mountain*).

Taylor is as sleek in other fields, after, having choreographed the musical *The Good Companions* and created the documentaries on Nijinsky, Borod Broda and Kurt Weill for the BBC. But it is with the Australian Dance Theatre that his work will be centred for the next few years at least, and if he can bring the same enthusiasm and energy (despite the troubles with money, audiences, spaces, dancers and so on) to his new company, I think that Australia will witness the rise of a very powerful force in contemporary dance.

Adelaide is now firmly in the control (colonial) of Englishness as the SATC, the State Opera, the Arts Council and the Festival Centre. This may be cause for concern for some (but after all, there is some Australian talent on the administrative and directive level in Australia), but if the results are strong, decisive and worth while, the world can be led aside for the time.





La Belle Helene

"... classic proof of the wisdom of concentrating production resources in quariers where they matter most"

One of the greater satisfactions of being a critic of the performing arts is that — you conveniently — are encounterd first-hand something as effervescently bubbling over with enthusiasm, style, good humour and a sense of genuine artistic accomplishment as the production of Jacques Offenbach's *La Belle Helene* staged by the Victoria State Opera in March.

The Belle Helene has been lauded by those who ought to know as a milestone in the development of the Victoria State company, not having summarised my work previously, I am unable to judge its worth the more relevant of all contexts, the general performing standards of the VSO itself. But, certainly it was at least the equal, if not always considered, of any opera performance I have seen staged in Australia in recent years by anyone other than the Australian Opera itself, and in terms of their entertainment value, it will certainly linger fondly in my memory for many years.

Its success was many-faceted, the result of the sort of fortuitous coming together of talents as these that is the key factor of many stage successes, particularly when some of the performers of semi-professional standard only and enthusiasts must make do, here and there, in lieu of expertise. Most obviously, there were the key performances of Suzanne Steele in the title role and Robert Gurd as Paris both runs rare very highly among the amateur talent available in Australia to undertake such actor-singer roles. Were the AOs asked to put on *La Belle Helene* this year, it would be hard put to better them as an opening night duo — but then, both may quite regularly with the national company, anyhow. Steele as a guest, Gurd as a fully-fledged student emu.

But the deeper success of the production arose from the behind-the-scenes (or at least off-stage) efforts of the three-member production team, for though there were some very good supporting performances, none of them was really on the same league as Gurd and Steele, nor were the musicians in the pit always absolutely up to coping with the (admittedly stringent) demands of the Offenbach score.

If one was forced to evaluate relatively the achievements of the three members of the particular production team, first

marks would go to Betty Pouder for her direction, for in her full, vivacious, the task of extracting congenitally vivish performances from a very uneven cast, some of whom were obviously not all that far above the rank-and-file level. That was added, apparently conscious of that fact, reflected great credit on her, and scarcely less on those who appeared on stage. For everyone obviously responded with greater enthusiasm to her direction, and if not always with the attention of raptility.

Richard Devall's contribution, as conductor, was marginally less impressive in scale, perhaps, because Offenbach's effervescent music just about speaks for itself provided that one gets the notes and the tempo more-or-less right. The performance went a good deal further than that, though there were a few technical slips and the lack of subtlety of interpretation that one expects to encounter when it is necessary to use a scratch orchestra that has not had the chance to build up a true sense of ensemble over a period. Its performance, on the night I saw *La Belle Helene*, was on the borderline between adequacy and excellence, it was perhaps as good as one can expect any amateur orchestra to be when confronted by such a sophisticated score.

It was just the standard where intensive cross-coupling, ensemble rehearsal is required to add the final dash of style that makes for the ultimate in performance, just as the standard where a requires proficiency of employment and intense drilling — for which read, in practical terms, a massive injection of cold, hard cash — if it is ever to get much better.

That I rate Kenneth Russell's designs last, among the three facets that contributed to the success of this *Belle Helene* in no way reflects on their intrinsic merit. It merely emphasises that the designer of any stage production is, by and large, visualised the enormous privilege of being allowed to speak for himself without the intrusion of any intermediary, given adequate caption of sets and costumes, as Russell had on this occasion, they can communicate equally as well as the amateur production in the fully professional one.

The Belle Helene was classic proof of the wisdom of concentrating one's always limited production resources in the

quariers where they matter most: the physical production was clever, workable and easy to look at without being wobbly (and, indeed, the evening was strongest where a measured pace, the orchestral backing always sprightly and spruce, even when a soprano lacked a measure of the finesse and subtlety it would have been nice to hear).

Absolutely the right tone was set for the VSO's *Belle Helene*, even before Act I began by the light-hearted boat carol with its central vignette of pageantry of characters, bacchan and Victorian, related to the legend of Helen of Troy, including prominently Jacques Offenbach himself (the richie-rich Offenbach would no doubt have approved heartily). The dress was repeated during the overture, to the other acts, as the audience was in the right mood for the crazy Offenbachian goings-on each time the curtain went up and the action resumed.

There was more visual humour to accompany the action itself, such as the small vignettes on the panels of Act I which resolved to become busy female torsos, and the dialogue was well translated and sufficiently explained by the odd contemporary interpolation or so the attention of the audience never faltered. The ensemble singing and singing was of a high standard, too, though there were times when one could have wished either for a good deal more volume from the major principals or for more restraint from the pit — at least from where I sat, though I gather that the Melbourne Friends just as sparkly accepted at the Cairnhill Theatre with which I am more familiar.

No matter how you look at it, though, the individual triumphs of the Melbourne *Belle Helene* with Suzanne Steele and Robert Gurd Number has absolutely the most beautiful operatic voice one can imagine, but in roles like these they are more than adequate, both art superbly and unfailingly get their lines, as master of spoken as song, accrue to an audience — a most important consideration in Offenbach, where so much of the impact depends on the absurdity of some of the text. Most effective among the supporting cast were Russell Smith (Circeus), Ian Cousins (Minstrelsy) and John Wood (Agamemnon). Their line in Act III was a comic opus that thoroughly delighted the audience — and especially so. Maureen Howard's Orestes and the two Aigars of Barry Stratton and Peter Cox also deserve special mention.

Despite the sort of reservations expressed above, one is tempted, when

arranging from performances such as this, to guest repertories as if they were going out of fashion. In the last flush of enthusiasm it is all too easy to hold the company responsible for the brightest star on the national operatic horizon, thus raising all the other regional companies — and perhaps even the ACO itself — with imminent collapse. So I hope I will not be accused too vigorously of being an insensitive, know-nothing old cynic (or worse, a Sydney dissident pig!) if I raise my eyebrows a little and step short of any such extravagant assessment. It is simply absurd to claim on the basis of one production — no matter how good — that a performing company has suddenly leapt from struggling adolescence to full maturity overnight. The hardest thing of all, in any of the performing arts, is to maintain absolute consistency of performing standards night after night, week after week. Without the inevitable chance to achieve ensemble coherence which is afforded by a great many performances in each year — dozen at least, preferably a hundred or more — it is all but impossible to ensure that the next performance of a production will be anything like as good as the last.

Particularly in this time, perhaps, of a temporary opera company, which must be very good — if not outstanding — at realising a wide variety of works-in-progress (otherwise it fails to qualify as a fully effective cultural asset of the community it serves). Big money and sensible administration are absolutely essential to the establishment of an artistically satisfying opera company, but unfortunately, big money and sensible administration do not necessarily result in such a company.

Those who have been closely in touch with the fortunes of the Australian Opera, as they have ebbed and flowed during its childhood and adolescence, will be aware of the fact that it takes every bit as long for an opera company to reach full maturity as for a human being to grow to adulthood. The ACO is 21 this year and its positions, artistic and financial, are far from over yet, though of course it has come an enormous way since that ill-fated season of 1956 at the Flemington Theatre in suburban Sydney, when the society wived in the bowers and the outposts of the Sydney Symphony OrchestraOUNTED the pit to run at the stage house as either side.

Looking back over these years, one can recall some of the earlier highlights with nostalgia and justified pride, but the real excitement of hindsight did not occur until after the year's break in the company's activities caused by the Sutherland-Williamson season of 1965. Since then there have been a good many more highlights — *God of the Gadflies* in 1966, *Faust* in 1971, *Rosenkavalier* in 1972, *The Magic Flute* in 1973, *Jeugh* in 1974, *Admetus* 1975, *Butterfly* in 1977, to name a few. But there have been low points too — the disastrous *Don Giovanni* of 1974, the awful dance — commedia dell'

arte programme of 1976 — and a good few productions that have required considerable refining after being received before they achieved sufficient quality to warrant being retained in the repertory. And all this despite a massive injection of subsidy funds on a scale no regional company can hope to receive in the foreseeable future.

Of course, one does not have the chance of refining one's repertory unless one works in a fully professional repertory set-up such as that enjoyed by the ACO no Australian regional company can get more than a single short run out of the same and effort, and moreover general preparation of a new production. If the thing doesn't click right from the start, it has to be written off and shaken up to expansion. We are only just now, this year, starting to see a little bit of learning-curve working by the regional has year's Adelaide production of *Christopher's Arbor Marriage* which went lick, stock, and

which are not fully used. The casting must be done very carefully, and the big problem of arranging an otherwise school but surely there must be more imaginative and open-minded entrepreneurship with the guts to take up that gamble and bring such a project to fruition. Or perhaps the localities, but I rather think there would be financial rewards as well as these artistic ones sought on above.

Brief mention must be made also, this month, of *Musae II*, which presented a mostly fascinating music theatre programme for two nights at the University of New South Wales's theater that ran early in March (a third performance scheduled for the recording hall at the Opera House had to be cancelled because of an industrial dispute).

Three of the four works performed were by Australian, and the fourth by the unfortunately untroubled American composer, John Cage. The Dances Exchange and the Sydney Percussion Ensemble combined to present the performing forces required Bill Fontaine's *Sacredphobic Music No. 1* and Alan Hinde's *To a Lost Brother* both had their moments of interest, but the highlight of the evening by far.

The theatrical highlight was Jacob Carroll's imaginative realisation of the Cage *Seascape*, with the singer Suzanne McDonald carried in horizontal and leaning a mezzo-soprano by two stage "workers" and the pianist, and accompanist, dressed as Barman and Robo or their ilk, playing draughts in a corner as the music progressed. And McDonald's cast partner, carried off again horizontally by the "workers" after she started backtracking on a single phrase of music. Her hints of distant sound, even after the two were off stage, provided a curiously bizarre climax to a thoroughly interesting piece.

The final item on the programme, though, Robert Young's *Group Song*, was the unequivocal musical highlight of the evening, thoroughly interesting in the progression of sounds it produced from a wide variety of gangs and drums, the music enhanced by some superb dance movements choreographed by Nancie Russell and executed by Eva Karsik, one of those several dancers who assimilate movements from every genre, and hence are absolutely fascinating to watch.

Potentially, at least, music-drama-mime programmes such as this, ought to appeal to passions of drama, opera, ballet and modern dance, unfortunately, they often attract little or no audience at all — perhaps on the ground that such a segment of the potential audience is more repelled by the other art forms than attracted to its own. Or perhaps it's just that there is, yet, no the total theatre audience.

In this case, inadequate audience publicity no doubt, was a good part of the cause for the sparse audience, but even the very best in this field, well promoted, is often a roaring box office success — as others have found to their chagrin.



barred to the Perth Festival in February of this year, the Melbourne *Billy Budd* I have just been talking about, which was booked eight-months in the Adelaide Festival Centre for five performances, there following hand on the eight-performance season at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne (What a bargain they get!).

It would have been nice if either or both of these excellent regional productions could also have gone to the Sydney Opera House, perhaps for three or four performances weekend sessions in the open theatre or even the drama theatre, which has a large enough pit to accommodate chamber opera satisfactorily. The problems in arranging such visits are numerous, but so are the potential rewards — for performers and audiences alike. And even if they can't be arranged at Flemington, there are other good venues available now in Sydney — the Seymour Centre, the new Her Majesty's and the new Theatre Royal, for instance —

The National Institute of Dramatic Art

at the

UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES Sydney, Australia

OFFERS THREE YEARS FULL-TIME TRAINING
COURSES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL THEATRE IN

- ACTING
- TECHNICAL
PRODUCTION
- DESIGN

There is a one-year post-Graduate Student Directors
Course for people already experienced in
Professional, University or Amateur Theatre

Enquiries should be addressed to

THE DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DRAMATIC ART,
P.O. BOX 1, KENSINGTON, N.S.W. 2033.
Phone: 663 3815

Ensemble Studios

An actor-training programme
which has evolved
in 25 years
From backstage gatherings
Between matinee and evening performances
of JCW productions
To a syllabus where one can study
As many as 45 hours a week

Ensemble Theatre
Evolved from these classes
As have some of Australia's most notable
Actors, directors and technicians.

Principal: — Hayes Gordon
Registrar: — Zika Meister

c/o Ensemble Theatre, Milson's Point,
NSW, 2061

Phone: (02) 829 8877
Cable: Ensemble, Sydney.

24TH SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

PRESENTS

AN EVENING OF NEW GERMAN CINEMA

Wednesday, June 8



*Jean Seberg and Peter Kern
in Hans Geissendorfer's Film of IBSEN'S
4.30 p.m. THE WILD DUCK*

German
Dialogue
English
Sub-Titled

Each Film
Assured
Once Only

*Margarethe von Trotta in Volker Schlöndorff's
7.30 p.m. THE COUP DE GRACE*

*Anna Karina and Ulli Lommel
in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's latest film
10.30 p.m. CHINESE ROULETTE*



\$1.00
Subscription
Ticket
Covers ALL 3
Fests
Over 14's
Only

STATE THEATRE, MARKET STREET, SYDNEY
Bookings: D.F.S., Mitchell's Bookshop, 663 3021

GALA OPENING: 29 May — 7.30 p.m. — \$3.50.

An Evening of Animation: A Short History of Animation and animated Nature ALLEGRO NON TROPPO



Britten's parables and the return to ritual

"The Prodigal Son is a work to be savoured with deliberation."

As all great church traditions seem to come out of song, religious ritual — pause here for a brief or self-effacing response if you find one coming on — it is probably inevitable as well as voluntary that drama of all kinds should reflect music at the springs of ritual from time to time. We have seen this happen in spoken theatre of the 20th century, and we find it taking place in a manner fashion in the church parables of Benjamin Britten.

Opera is, by its nature, closer to ritual and, specifically, song ritual than almost any other form of theatre except the church service itself. Yet it, too, has fallen from time to time into a sentimental realism which may be entertaining and touching but which ultimately would lead to the disintegration of the very qualities which make opera unique and worth cultivating. It would deprive it of that elevation of moments of passion and humourous or bizarre life which distances it effectively from realism and endows it with a capacity for bearing repeated scrutiny and hearing in which a far surpasses all spoken drama.

Britain's immediate source of stimulus in embarking on his series of three church parables was the experience of seeing Noh drama in Japan and, specifically, the famous archaic Noh play *Sumidagawa*. The first of the parables, *Carles River*, is in fact a transcription of the basic story of *Sumidagawa* to a setting in medieval England. The processes and formal robing and unrobing of Noh drama are undertaken in the transformed context by an order of monks. The use of stylized half-masks, the disciplined deployment of gesture and the convention of using male singers for both male and female parts are also in parallel with Japanese (and other) theatrical practice.

Britten has not attempted to write fake Japanese music in *Carles River*, even if a sometimes occurs that he has. The dissonances, when it does occur, is due to the fact that he is using similar technical procedures, not similar material. In other words, he is using heterophony (simultaneous variations of a single basic melody) as the technique of much Eastern music and he is using a melodic course which is a step or two closer to having a pentatonic basis than the conventional major and minor modes. The melody which acts as a setting for the piece is thus very definitely a traditional piastchon, the basic tone convention. It is stated by the

monks when they first appear and it follows them into silence at the end. The instrumentalists are part of the brotherhood of the producers, and *Carles River* abandons many of the familiar traditions of opera in order to return to the conventions which at one time were held in common by most cultures and religions.

No one who has seen *Carles River* in performance will forget the theatrical-emotional impact it makes. Its success encouraged Britten (in partnership with the same librettist, William Plomer) to follow it with *The Burning Fury Farmer*, which tells the biblical story of the three young men of Israel who risk execution at the orders of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon rather than betray their faith. Although the specific source for the visual presentation of *The Burning Fury Farmer* was the stained glass in Chartres Cathedral, the style and techniques are essentially the same as those of *Carles River*. The seven instrumentalists required for the earlier work (flute, bassoon, viola, double bass, harp, percussion, chamber organ) receive a single reinforcement: the player of an alto oboe. The alto oboe's tone colour and attack, rather than the colours of gold and flame inherent in the parable's Babylonian setting and subject matter. As before, the instrumentalists work in concert with one another and with the singers with the responsibility and sensitivity of chamber players and, therefore, without the guidance of a conductor. As before, the vertical co-ordination of instrumental and vocal lines is focused (Britten's earlier sign 'F'), which he intended for *Carles River*, implying these points of co-ordination in the score where a singer or player will wait for his colleagues when their internal pace has diverged from his.

Carles River is a tragedy of the most austere kind, the old, sleep-on-the-ten-county-blows, though it and matches the bleak endurance of its story of a mother's search for the truth of her son's death. *The Burning Fury Farmer*, by contrast, is a rich and warm-blood score and an appropriately turbulent spectacle within the pentagonal limits of the stage. It moves less deeply, I think, but compensates for this with greater theatrical diversity and appeal.

The Prodigal Son, which has appeared again as disc recently (World Record Club release, R 00138, of an original Decca

recording), is a different affair. Its visual presentation is drawn from Islamic art this time. Much more significantly, it is a combination of morality play and pastoral. A reclusive brotherhood is again summoned to be presenting the parable. The ritual of the opening procession and unrobing is broken art, however, by the figure of the Tempter. He is played by the abbot of the brotherhood. To an audience accustomed to the formal and symmetrical opening and closing of the two earlier parables it is a calculated surprise that this solo scene of temptation should assert itself before the line of the work, as it speaks, has been completely set in position. The Tempter has the trumpet as an attendant instrument. It plays again, following mass. The line of the two earlier parables is replicated by an alto flute (but continuing to double piccolo), which sounds in time with the peaceful circular health of the pictorial scenes.

All the technical devices employed in *Carles River* continue to be used in *The Prodigal Son*. Yet the texture is amazingly different in character. *The Prodigal Son*, like most parables, is less initially gripping in the theatre than as stage and dramatic predecessors. Its subtle musical procedures and evolving characterisation are particularly suited to connoisseurship and to listening on a recording as line as drama.

In addition, prolonged listening to the work rewards us of the complex moral and social rigours, quite timeless in their application, raised by its perennially fascinating story. Even if we approve of the idea of reconciliation implicit in the parable, it is easy for most people to understand the resentment of the Elder Son that his favored and wayward brother should be having his cake and eating it. Some paradoxes are so obvious at the moral points they make that a dramatisation of them seems redundant. This one brother returns a level of insight and wisdom such as few of us can expect to attain or maintain.

The Prodigal Son is a work to be savoured with deliberation. Ideally, it should be approached through the two earlier Britten parables, which are also available on single-disc recordings of high-quality, but it will stand on its own, too. The English Opera Group performance under the composer's supervision is not likely to be surpassed and will rarely be approached. The organisation and consistency of several opera presentations will reveal that the possibilities are unlikely to be perceived with the special preparation and competence they need.

Eliza Frazer

F

"... two of the most boring hours I have spent in a cinema . . ."



Eliza Frazer. Producer/director, Tim Burstall; screenplay, David Williamson; music, Bruce Samson. A Bonython Production. 1985. From: National York, David Brandon, John Maitre, Cecilia Rose, McElroy, John Codd, Captain Frazer, Ned Porter, John Graham, Martin Handl, Ruth Ryan, Trevor Howard. With: Augusto, Guy Mironoff, George Mailley, Lindsay Kempsey, Bruce Spence, Garry Kennedy, Charles Trappell, Bill Hunter, Sue Scott, Wayne Lassall, Ingolf Mosen, Morris Pasha.

Swooping into the cinemas on a wave of ballyhoo, *Eliza Frazer* was almost universally panned by the critics. This much heralded blockbuster made at a cost of around \$1.5 million, was a dud.

David Williamson, scriptwriter, and Tim Burstall, director, felt obliged to jump to the defense of their film and indignantly pointed out that the film had taken \$1 million at the box office in the first seven weeks of screening. Not long afterwards, the Sydney season's last days were announced. Three months is not a good run for a film that is supposed to be doing so well.

Williamson and Burstall were suggesting that a movie that can make so much money is a good film. A film that makes \$1 million in a short period is nothing more than a film that has made a lot of money. And the amount of money means no more than a lot of people have been to see it, it makes no judgment on the merits or otherwise of the film.

Presumably a film's first aim is to make money, its second to entertain and/or get across a point of view, and third to be an artistic success. Most films are made for sheer entertainment. To while away a few

hours, and succeed on those narrow grounds others seek to do a little more than be mere fluff for the voracious appetite of a broad and banal public.

Tim Burstall has been chomping to trash this mid-entertainment pot since his debacle with the Americans. Two Thousand Weeks Bleeding in television, Burstall has directed some exciting short films, including *The Price*, but he's the big time with *Alive People*, a like of rated version that was like a more hard-core version of the English *Carry On Film*. But it made a lot of money and Tim Burstall's name became synonymous with fast-film production.

He tried to repeat his success with a second film, though this time he only produced, but it was not to be. His next directing assignment was *Eliza Frazer*, another of those yucky drama-of-an-older trying to make a go of it set of his own makes and staffing it up. It was more like a two-hour corporate commercial and populated the art-house audience and the general public. That Stanley Kubrick thought it was so wonderful was little consolation to the backers.

Then Burstall tried his hand at a thriller, *Leaf Blip*. It was full of polished performances, good photography and had everything going for it except its middle-of-the-plot. The film could not sustain interest and would have been better as a television, which it looked like anyway.

Thus brings us to *Eliza Frazer*, or to give the film its full title, *A Frightful Narrative of the Captain, Sufferings and Miserable Escape of Eliza Frazer*. The title is supposed to give a warning of the jolly, bawdy, Tom Jones-ish romp which is to

follow, and which doesn't.

Period drama is so removed from what Williamson usually writes that it is out of his depth. He is at home in contemporary Australian society, but his script is at its ease with Victorian-period rituals and manners. What he has done is drag up those old chestnuts that have made people laugh for centuries.

Eliza is the pretty wife of the elderly, fat Captain Frazer, a figure of much fun (it is to Ned Porter's credit that he manages to make his character human and at once sympathetic). He is cuckolded by younger and more attractive men, humiliated by his wife both sexually and emotionally, and humiliated by the Aborigines, who strip off his clothing and tickle him at the time when he won't work. There is, of course, nothing funnier than to see a fat old dogged at this moment, particularly when it is done by some coarse black men who dress up in his and his wife's clothes, and the audience howls.

There is also a good spooling of mucky through the film. For those that way minded, there is Aboriginal, and for the ladies and the gay audience there are various lascivious glances of John Waters in the buff (though not enough to gain the censor's wrath and an R certificate), and the audience again titillated as Mr Waters standardised around attempting to hide his penises or covering his York's bladders.

In case this becomes known than as a rather poor-looking shitecock, doggerel, chauvinism and a sexist homosexual police commander (played with much dash by Trevor Howard). There is a fat something for everyone in *Eliza Frazer*, but this does not prevent its being two of the most boring hours I have spent in a cinema.

Williamson integrates all the stock characters in his story of Eliza, who is shipwrecked among Aborigines, rescued, widowed and who later makes her fortune at gambling, seductions by telling, and gambling again, for adventures. In fact there are so many ridiculous characters it's like a *Who's Who* of bad acting.

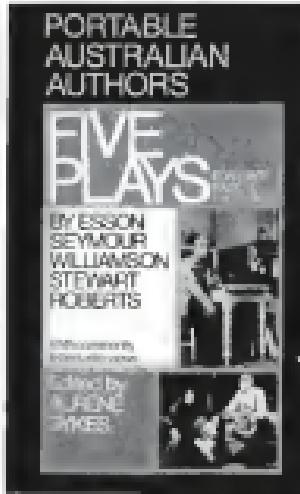
Burstall's direction has no sense of period, and the comedy sequences in particular are ponderous. Even the moments of what should have been genuine shock, the fight sequence (done under a tent), the shipwreck (which), the fight bycoach are so perfunctorily done that I wonder whether Burstall left at once with them.

It's not that *Eliza Frazer* is bad, it's that it fails to deliver on all of its aims — it's boring.



Five Plays for Stage, Radio and Television

Australian drama study comes of age



Five Plays for Stage, Radio and Television, edited by Anne-Marie Quennell, Queensland University Press, Portable Australian Authors Series

That Australian drama studies have come of age seems to me evident from this new free-ranging anthology of Australian plays. It is quite clearly directed towards the student, as both the snappy, tight prose and Alison Sykes's rather provocative historical analysis of Australian drama indicate. In this respect Queensland University Press's intention is different from that of Currency, which, I believe, has always directed itself primarily to the actor and the performance. It may be that as their tool to interpret a range of drama this Australian plays the QUP editors have produced a tool quite appropriate to both and point for use in education, but in any case their perspective is different.

The five plays here are Louis Esson's *The Doctor*, Seymour's *The One Day of the Year*, Williamson's *What If You Died Tomorrow*, Douglas Stewart's *The Golden Lovers*, and Ted Roberts's previously unpublished television play *Lincoln's Boy*, with liaison, interviews and other material relating to these plays. The plays range across the 20th century, beginning with

The Doctor (first published in 1920) and ending with a TV play of the mid-70s. They also range across the three dramatic media of stage, radio and television. Beyond this, however, the editor, Alison Sykes, has not compartmentalised herself into choosing plays according to fixed patterns or types.

In this respect the volume differs pleasantly from many other anthologies in which plays are linked artificially by theme or, as with the new wave of Currency publications, by tradition in sociological aspect (cf. Sykes has come down firmly on the side of plays the audience very good, perhaps the *writer's* but, without let or reward suggesting that theatrical or media visibility are ignored in the book, I would say that the focus is primarily literary and textual. The development of authentic Australian speech patterns is also a concern.

It is pleasant, within two pages, to be able to comment on the publication of two Louis Esson plays QUP has done a fine one with Esson's classical comedy *The Doctor*, a play often compared with Synge's *Riders in the Sky*. Alison Sykes challenges the reader to ask whether the distinction of the play might just be the vacuous separation of dreary life for city readers. She also dares to suggest that Esson's carefully wrought "bawdy" language may not have the authentic ring of large Australian dramatists (and especially David Williamson). While I disagree with her that 1920s doctors wouldn't have used very polite expressions such as "curse the pictures", "vivat", "my oath", and "blame that", I have always been struck by the excessively old-world refinement of bushmen in fact, I think she makes an effective case against Esson's "big speechies" at being slightly fake. In Andrew Miller's recent NLA's production of Esson's *Mother and Son*, (and you, the red purple passages and big speeches seemed to work very well) but if the language is questionable, *The Doctor* still retains the most "Australian" and the most iconic of Esson's plays — the fairest straight translation of the strong, clear-cut myth. So predictably local is it that I was told by some European students that the behaviour of characters in this play was "laughing" and "cusses". The doctors are cracking jokes as their friend Biggles Bill prepares to die in the desert,

and to me the humour has always seemed absolutely true.

Studious and human qualities of the plays I read do not seem much in evidence with *The One Day of the Year*, and *What If*, both of which illustrate the shift in Australian cultural emphasis from bush to city and from lower to upper classes. Certainly Seymour's play still reads well, and indeed, in his lyrical pants can, no consideration in which the young hero capitulates, rings truer than does the end of *The Gold*. It is also a fine play to examine in contrast with the other stage plays. The outcome of the interaction mainly by *The Gold* makes a strong if surprising reading. I would argue that for students of Australian drama the move from Seymour's free-scholarly to Williamson's tender environment in *What If You Died Tomorrow* will be worth examining, particularly as Seymour has attempted a North Shore character in his play with no great success.

The editor's justification for including Douglas Stewart's New-Zealandish play *The Golden Lovers* rather than the Australian *Not Kelly* is quite parsimonious — she thinks it is Stewart's best play. She uses the occasion, moreover, to point up the differences between radio drama and other kinds of play, and expresses Professor Harold Bloom's contention that "the radio play has one great defect, that the characters in it can't talk". I thought this was especially telling, coming as it does, just when many people in the theatre are beginning to reject the Australian cult of non-verbal theatre. I think particularly of John Bell's recent programme move to Louis Nevel's *Amor Fati*, in which he makes a place for human and articulate drama. The virtues of radio drama, as analysed by Ms Sykes, are of course just such verbal ones.

In the light of her remarks about radio drama, Ms Sykes's special area of interest, it is a pity that she could not have given a greater length on the special qualities of television drama. She does explore why she has chosen the Ted Roberts play, and points to the dominance of unspoken action and reaction, but since that section of her introduction will be the most propagative for school students studying the different media, some further analysis would have been useful. As it is, she does not mention the significant questions about writing for the different media, and I might suggest that the schools will find that an excellent focus for such studies, then perhaps questions are more important than answers.

Pre-publication offer to readers of *Theatre Australia*

Directed by Ken G. Hall will be published by Lansdowne in late June at a recommended price of \$14.95.

You can reserve your copy now at \$12.50 post free for delivery on publication.

This autobiography, illustrated with personal photos and with from his Cineplex features and reviews, recounts the life of the pioneer of the Australian film industry. In the 1930s and 40s Ken Hall made seventeen feature films such as "Dual and Done", "Orphan of the Wilderness", and "Smashy", many of which were shown by To Playhouse Press Pty Ltd
184 Commercial Street,
Richmond, Victoria, 3121

the ABC under the series title "Clock Go the Years".

A large proportion of the book is devoted to exploring the past, but Ken Hall draws on his long experience to review the current state of the industry, and in the latter part of the book he offers trenchant criticisms of recent policies and constructive ideas for change.

Please reserve me copies of *Directed by Ken G. Hall* at the special pre-publication price of \$12.50 post free. I enclose a cheque for made payable to Playhouse Press Pty Ltd.

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

This offer is valid only until 15 June 1977. Copies will be despatched on publication in late June in stocks and made available from the publishers.



For that after-theatre supper of sweet or savory crepes...

THE PANCAKE PLACE

376 LYGON PLACE, CARLTON.

12-18.7 days
(8 a.m. Fri. & Sat.)

OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO AMATEUR COMPANIES

Theatre Australia offers low budget listings for amateur productions — "Off Broadway" classifieds.

For only \$4.00 per 30 character line (maximum \$12.00), you can advertise your existence, your next show, your location or your interest in new members to an ideal audience — the readers of *Theatre Australia*.

Send your copy and a cheque to cover the above rate to "Off Broadway", *Theatre Australia*, 184 Commercial Street, Richmond, Victoria, 3121 by the 5th of the month preceding publication. Copy received after that date will be run in the following issue.

Coming up in June:
What a Chorus Line looks like; What Frank Thring worries about; What Fred Schepisi is doing next.
Have you taken out your subscription yet?

Theatre Australia. Look for Frank Thring on the cover.